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LIFE OF
SAINT ELIZABETH

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Archbishop.

LIFE OF

SAINT ELIZABETH

OF HUNGARY

DUCHESS OF THURINGIA

BY

THE COUNT DE MONTALEMBERT
PEER OF FRANCE, MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

TRANSLATED BY

FRANCIS DEMING HOYT

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To the Sweet Memory

of my wife

JULIE SCAMMON HOYT

by whose side I have spent many of the happiest
hours of my life, in the work of this
translation, and who is now with
St. Elizabeth in heaven

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Charles Forbes René de Montalembert was born in London May 29, 1810. His grandfather, Count Jean de Montalembert, was one of the noblemen who were driven from France by the Revolution; and his father, who was fifteen years of age at the time of the emigration, took service with the English army in India. In 1808 the latter married the only child of James Forbes, an English gentleman who had spent several years in India, and was a writer upon philosophical and scientific subjects.

After the restoration, Charles' father returned to France, was made Minister Plenipotentiary to Stuttgart by Louis XVIII, and afterwards served as Ambassador to Sweden under Charles X.

The first eight years of our author's life were spent in London, at the home of his grandfather, Mr. James Forbes. He was educated at the College Sainte-Barbe, in Paris, and in 1831, upon the death of his father, entered the Chamber of Peers.

The revolution of 1848 abolished the Chamber of Peers, and the following year Montalembert was elected a member of the National Assembly, for the Department of Doabs, the old province of Franche-Comté.

In 1852 he was elected a member of the French Academy.

His public career terminated in 1857, when he failed of re-election to the Assembly, and the remaining years of

his life were devoted to literary and historical work. He died in Paris March 13, 1870.

Charles, Count de Montalembert, was one of the great men, and certainly one of the lovable men, of the nineteenth century. As he himself said of Lacordaire, he was "born to love and to struggle." Gifted by nature with talents of the highest order, he was a close observer and an indefatigable student all his life. His character was pure and exalted, noble and generous; and withal he possessed that naïve simplicity which is the charm of all true nobility.

He was the leader of the Catholic Party in France in its struggles for religious liberty, and no man of his time was better qualified for the position than he was, by his ability and religious fervor, and by his courage and eloquence.

It is not my purpose here to enter upon any general discussion of the life and work of Montalembert; but I may be permitted to present a few extracts from his speeches, delivered at different periods, which will help to illustrate the character and motives of the author of *The Life of St. Elizabeth*.

On the 9th of May, 1831, M. l'Abbé Lacordaire, M. le Vicomte de Montalembert, and M. de Coux, editors of the *Avenir*, and members of the Association for the defence of religious liberty, opened in Paris a free school, without authorization, the law of May 10, 1806, having given to the University of Paris the exclusive right of control in educational matters in France. The school was closed by the police within forty-eight hours, and the three young Catholic teachers were summoned, as they had anticipated, to appear before the *police correctionelle*.

In the meantime the Comte de Montalembert having

died, the vicomte succeeded to the hereditary rights of his father as a Peer of France; and as the law provided that no peer should be judged except by the Chamber of Peers, the case of the young count and his two associates, accused of having opened without authorization a free school in Paris, was transferred to the bar of the Chamber, where it was heard on the 19th of September.

"It was thus," says M. Sainte-Beuve, "that M. de Montalembert, suddenly succeeding to the position of a peer on the very eve of the abolition of its hereditary character, made his début as an orator at the bar of the noble Chamber at the age of twenty-one, and in the position of defendant. But his youth, his ease, his grace, the elegant precision of his style and diction veiled this fact; and his judges were the first to forget that the speaker before them was one accused at their bar. . . . From that day M. de Montalembert, though formally condemned, was borne in the very heart of the peerage — he was its Benjamin."

Standing there before his judges, he spoke with that frankness and courage which characterized all his public utterances. After describing forcibly the great injustice inflicted upon the Catholics of France by the restrictive law, giving a monopoly of teaching to the irreligious university, he exclaimed: "If I were a father, I would rather a thousand times see my children remain all their life in ignorance and idleness, than expose them to the horrible risk, which I myself incurred, of purchasing a little knowledge at the cost of the faith of their fathers, at the cost of all there was of purity and freshness in their souls, of honor and virtue in their hearts. . . . Ah! for us liberty has never been more than a mockery! Fifteen years ago a great man, M. de Maistre, said: '*The Gallican Church is*

free in the sense that it is free not to be Catholic.' That is the résumé of our history. We are free not to be Catholics, not to be Christians, and in return free to be perjurers and renegades. We are free to offset the faith of our childhood by the wickedness of our life, free to repay the benefits we have received from God, by disobedience, ingratitude and apostasy; but, free to obey in all things and everywhere His holy law? No; free to devote our life to Him? No; free to practice all the duties of our religion, and all the commandments of our faith? No; in a word, free to be the slaves of evil? Yes; but free to be the servants of good and the children of God? No, a thousand times, No. Ah! let them not talk to us, then, of freedom of religion, who have reduced it to a point where it is freedom to believe in nothing. . . . But I do not know why I adopt here the language of sadness and discouragement, when my heart is full of fervor and hope. No, I do not think that my Faith can die. I do not believe that the breath which gave it life is destined to be extinguished by a mortal breath. It is because I believe it is endued with the vigor and strength of an eternal future that I have consecrated to it my brief and obscure life. And not only do I believe that it will live, but I believe it alone can vivify the world. It alone can bring peace and happiness to the people to whom it is our glory to belong, to the country which is the object of our dearest affections, to the popular masses who build up and tear down worldly royalties, and for whom those royalties are always sterile."

Again, in a memorable speech delivered in the Chamber of Peers, in 1844, in behalf of religious liberty, he said: "We take for our motto that with which the generous Poles in the last century headed their manifesto of resist-

ance to the Empress Catherine, — 'We who love freedom more than all the world, and the Catholic religion more than freedom.' . . .

"And I declare to you in the name of Catholic laymen like myself, Catholics of the nineteenth century, we will not be helots in the midst of a free people. We are the successors of the martyrs, and we do not tremble before the successors of Julian the Apostate. We are the sons of the Crusaders, and we will never draw back before the sons of Voltaire."

The last sentence became proverbial among the Catholics of France: "Nous sommes les fils des Croisés, et nous ne reculerons jamais devant les fils de Voltaire."

His courage, as well as his loyalty and devotion to the Holy See, were shown in a brilliant speech delivered before the National Assembly October 19, 1849.

Victor Hugo had preceded him in a violent speech against the Pontifical Government, and Montalembert's first words on ascending the tribune were: "Gentlemen, the speech you have just heard has received the punishment it deserves in the cheers which it has received." The excitement and confusion following this remark were intense, and for some time he was unable to proceed. When he did so he was met with frequent and exasperating interruptions. He maintained, however, his habitual coolness and self-possession, and presently his eloquence had carried everything before it. When he left the tribune he had won a complete triumph. Speaking of the inevitable failure which, sooner or later, overtakes those who struggle against the Holy See, he said: "And why is failure certain? Ah! remark this well — because there is inequality of force between the Holy See and you, or whoever struggles against it. And understand that this

inequality is not in your favor, but against you. You have three hundred thousand men, fleets, artillery, all the resources that material force can furnish, it is true. And the Pope has nothing of all this; but he has what you do not possess, moral force — an empire over souls and consciences, to which you can make no pretensions, and this empire is immortal.

"You deny it; you deny this moral force, you deny the empire of the pontifical authority over souls — that empire which has subdued the proudest emperors; but there is one thing you can not deny, and that is the weakness of the Holy See. . . .

"Permit me a familiar comparison. When a man is condemned to struggle with a woman, if that woman is not the most degraded of beings, she may defy him with impunity. She says to him, 'Strike, but you will disgrace yourself, and you will not overcome me.' The Church is not a woman; she is more than a woman, *She is a mother!*

"She is a mother, the mother of Europe, the mother of modern society, the mother of modern humanity. A son may be unnatural, rebellious, ungrateful, but he does not cease to be a son; and there comes a moment in every struggle against the Church when this parricidal contest becomes insupportable to the human race, and when he who has waged it falls overwhelmed and ruined, whether by defeat, or by the unanimous reprobation of humanity."

When he exclaimed in an outburst of eloquence, "L'Église, c'est une mère," the whole Assembly was profoundly moved, and he closed amid universal applause; or, as one of the leading papers of Paris, the *Journal des Débats,* said, "such cheers as no one remembers to have heard in any deliberative assembly." Thiers, who was

present, remarked: "He is the most eloquent of men, and his speech the finest I have ever heard. I envy him for it, but I hope the envy is no sin; for I love the beautiful, and I love Montalembert."

A few days later he had the distinguished honor of receiving from Pius IX a brief, in which the Holy Father says: "The discourse which you pronounced, dearly beloved and noble son, in the General Assembly of Representatives the 19th of last month, is another and brilliant proof of your talent, and of your fervent zeal in defence of our cause. It will live forever in the memory of good men. Surely there is nothing more admirable than that greatness of soul and noble courage of which you have given proof, and nothing more precious amid the scarcity of generous men of whom civil society stands in need, and at a time when ambition is so flagrant, and most men through temporal motives give themselves up to novelties and to erroneous opinions, and measure everything by the standard of selfish interest. We congratulate you," etc.

His reception at the French Academy occurred February 5, 1852. In his address on that occasion, before an audience which included the most distinguished men of France, and many of those whom in his great speech in the Chamber of Peers, in 1844, he had challenged as the "Sons of Voltaire," he did not hesitate to condemn in the strongest language the folly of the legislators of 1789, who had "destroyed everything, that everything might be recreated."

"Let us not forget," he said, "that it is they who have written in our laws, and in our hearts, in defiance of nature and good sense, that vain hope of equality, the realization of which, always promised and always expected,

would leave society in a permanent state of falsehood and warfare. To open the most brilliant careers to true merit, to satisfy all lawful ambition, by means of labor and perseverance, is a duty; but to stimulate a factitious and universal production of unlimited pretensions by overthrowing all the barriers — pliable enough in themselves — which tradition, habit, and family associations oppose to the torrent of greedy mediocrities; this was a criminal folly. It is a folly which we have been guilty of, and we must pay the penalty. . . . Society has promised more than she can ever give; an insoluble problem has been created, and all France has been made the victim of an odious deception. . . . To escape this melancholy fate there is but one way to follow, that of an energetic return to the fundamental laws which God has given as ruler to the conscience and to society."

In an address before the great Catholic Congress of Mechlin, Belgium, in August, 1863, upon "A Free Church in a Free State," one of his last public utterances, speaking of the dangers of democracy, he said: "Looking ahead I see nothing anywhere but democracy. I see this deluge rise, rise continually, reaching everything and overflowing everything. I fear it as a man, but as a Christian I do not fear it; for where I see the deluge, I see also the ark. Upon that great ocean of democracy, with its abysses, its whirlpools, its breakers, its dead calms, and its hurricanes, the Church alone may venture forth without defiance and without fear. She alone will never be swallowed up there. She alone has a compass that never varies, and a Pilot who makes no mistakes."

To say that Montalambert sometimes erred in his judgment, is to admit that he was human. But, be it said to

his eternal praise, he was always a humble, loyal, and obedient son of the "Mother" whom he served with all his mind and heart, — the Catholic Church. When "Rome had spoken," neither his voice nor his pen were ever raised to question her decision. In his own words, "She alone has a Pilot who makes no mistakes."

Of his literary works, the best known and most valuable is undoubtedly *The Monks of the West.* But it is to the inspiration which he drew from his work upon *The Life of St. Elizabeth* that we owe the later and larger work. The first was the sweet and fragrant flower that yielded in due time its rich and abundant fruit.

May we not believe that both of these rich treasures of Catholic faith and devotion, which have brought, and for generations to come will continue to bring, light and strength and comfort to thousands of souls, were the mystical fruit of an act of humble, loyal, and prompt submission on the part of the young Count de Montalembert and his noble, brilliant companion, Lacordaire, to the warning voice of Mother Church, conveyed in the Encyclical of Gregory XVI, August 15, 1832?

They had gone to Rome the latter part of the year 1831, with the Abbé de Lamennais, to obtain from the Holy See the approbation of their work as set forth in the *Avenir*, a journal which they had published at Paris during the preceding year. Montalembert was then twenty-one, and Lacordaire about eight years his senior. The decision of Rome, as conveyed to them in the encyclical referred to, was unfavorable to their projects. Their prompt and unqualified submission to this judgment, which was of course a crushing disappointment to their cherished hopes, was unintelligible to the non-Catholic world. The subsequent course of M. de Lamennais I

need not refer to here. Lacordaire and Montalembert proved that however devoted they were to the cause of liberty and the progress of free institutions, as they had interpreted those ideas, they were before all else loyal to their God, and to the teachings of His infallible Church.

The English Protestant authoress, Mrs. Oliphant, who published in two volumes a *Memoir of Count de Montalembert,* and who admired intensely his character and works, found it quite difficult to understand this episode in his life; that he should have "put a seal upon his lips in obedience to the mandate of the Pope; and all this at twenty-three, and *in the nineteenth century.*" She devotes a chapter of her interesting book to a remarkable effort to explain and account to her Protestant readers for this "Catholic Submission"; such is the title of the chapter.

"The question," she says, "is so strange, so intricate, so all but incomprehensible to us, that it demands the most patient consideration. . . . There is no opinion more generally held on this side of the Channel, than that the life of such a man as Montalembert is a mistake, wilfully stultified by his own action, and made useless to humanity in secular matters because of its subservience in matters spiritual."

She frankly condemns this view herself, as an "uncomfortable doctrine . . . which may be equally applied to ourselves by any obtuse intelligence which declines to make any attempt to understand us; wholly uninstructive, throwing no light to us upon human nature; but on the contrary, closing the door between us and some of our fellow-creatures, whom it might be well worth our while to understand. . . . It is hard for us, to whom *the liberty of private judgment is the very foundation of all intellec-*

tual and spiritual life, to understand a man who carefully and vigorously limits that liberty, and in one class of subjects relinquishes it altogether."

She reminds her readers that "Lacordaire and Montalembert both belonged to that class . . . which by temperament and conviction is more devoted to the Church than to the State. With such men religious influences hold a place higher than any other. . . . To his life's end there never was a movement for constitutional and popular freedom which did not secure the instant interest of Montalembert, which did not swell his voice, and light up his eye with sympathy; but above all this, and still more precious, he held the progress of religion."

How impenetrable indeed is the veil which hides the ineffable beauties of faith and religion from the eyes of those who know not, and love not, the "Bride of Christ"! They have forgotten that "For us Christ was made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." They have read, but they have not understood the invitation: "Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum; et tollet crucem suam quotidie, et sequatur me." (Luke ix, 23.)

To the Catholic mind it is indeed "strange and incomprehensible," that in this "enlightened age" educated people, who pride themselves upon their knowledge and their liberal views on all subjects, should be in such profound ignorance of the faith and spirit of Catholics. And yet it is undoubtedly true, that outside of the Church there is no subject deserving serious consideration, upon which there is so much lamentable ignorance and misconception, as the history and teaching, the spirit and practice of the Mother Church.

And here we recall that in opening and closing the beautiful *Life of St. Elizabeth,* Montalembert quotes the

words of our Blessed Lord, "JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID: I CONFESS TO THEE, O FATHER, LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, BECAUSE THOU HAST HID THESE THINGS FROM THE WISE AND PRUDENT, AND HAST REVEALED THEM TO LITTLE ONES."

FRANCIS DEMING HOYT.

NEW YORK, June 6, 1904.

INTRODUCTION

To the Memory of my Sister

ELIZABETH

ROSALIE CLARA de MONTALEMBERT

WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF FIFTEEN

INTRODUCTION

On the nineteenth of November, 1833, a traveller arrived at Marburg, a city of Hesse-Cassel, situated on the charming banks of the Lahn. He stopped there to study the Gothic church which it contains, and which is celebrated for its pure and perfect beauty, as well as because of its having been the first in Germany in which the ogee prevailed over the round-headed arch in the great renovation of art in the thirteenth century. This basilica bears the name of St. Elizabeth, and it happened that that very day was her feast. In the church, which at the present day is Lutheran, as is, in fact, the whole country, no mark of solemnity was visible; only, in honor of the day, and contrary to Protestant custom, it was open, and little children were playing there, jumping over the tombs. The stranger wandered through the vast nave, deserted and devastated, though youthful still in its lightness and elegance. He saw standing before one of the pillars the statue of a young woman in the garb of a widow, of a sweet and resigned face, holding in one hand the model of a church, while with the other she is giving alms to a poor lame man. Further on, over the deserted altars, where now no sacerdotal hand ever comes to disturb the dust, he examined with curiosity some half-effaced ancient paintings in wood, and some mutilated sculptures in relief, both, however, profoundly impressed with the naïve and tender charm of Christian art. He distinguished there a young woman with startled look, as she exhibits to a young warrior her mantle filled with roses; further on, this same

warrior, throwing the clothes with violence from his bed, discovers there Christ extended on the cross; still further on, both appear parting with great grief from each other's embrace; next is seen the young woman, more beautiful than any of the other subjects, prostrate on her bed of death, surrounded by priests and religious who are weeping; in the last scene bishops are lowering into the grave a coffin, upon which an emperor deposits his crown. The traveller was told that these were scenes in the life of St. Elizabeth, the sovereign of that country, whose death occurred just six centuries ago that day, in this same city of Marburg, and who was buried in this same church.

At the farther end of an obscure sacristy he was shown the silver shrine, ornamented with carved work, which had contained the relics of the blessed Saint up to the time when one of her descendants, having become a Protestant, had taken them thence and cast them to the winds.

Beneath the stone baldachin, which formerly covered the shrine, he noticed that each step was worn away with a deep depression, and he was told that this was produced by the innumerable pilgrims who formerly came there to kneel, but who had come no more during the three past centuries. He knew, indeed, that there were in the city some of the faithful, and a Catholic priest; but there was neither mass, nor any remembrance whatsoever, of the Saint whose anniversary it was. Faith, which had left its impress so well upon the cold stone, had left none upon their hearts.

The stranger kissed the stone worn by faithful generations, and resumed his lonely course; but the sweet, sad remembrance of this forsaken Saint, whose forgotten feast he had come, an involuntary pilgrim, to celebrate, did not leave him.

He undertook to study her life; he searched, one after

another, through the rich collections of ancient history which educated Germany offers in such great numbers.[1] Captivated and charmed each day more and more by what he learned of her, this thought became little by little the guiding star of his progress. After having exhausted books and chronicles, and consulted the most neglected manuscripts, he wished, as the first of the early historians of the Saint had done, to examine localities and popular traditions. He went, therefore, from city to city, from castle to castle, from church to church, seeking everywhere traces of her who at all times in Catholic Germany has been called *the dear Saint Elizabeth*. He tried in vain to visit her birthplace at Presburg, in Hungary. But at least he was able to sojourn at the celebrated castle of Wartburg, to which she came when a mere child, where her early years were spent, and where she was married to a husband tender and pious like herself; he was permitted to climb the rough paths which she had trod when going to distribute among her dearest friends, the poor, her inexhaustible charity. He followed her to Creuzburg, where she first became a mother; to the Monastery of Reinhartsbrunn, where at the age of twenty, she was called upon to give up her dearly loved husband, who went forth to die for the tomb of Christ; to Bamberg, where she found a refuge from cruel persecutions; on to the holy mountain of Andechs, the cradle of her family, whither she brought as an offering her bridal robe; where from a tenderly loved wife she had become a wandering and exiled widow. At Erfurt he touched with his lips the poor glass which she had left as a souvenir to the humble religious. Finally to Marburg, where she consecrated the last days of her life to works of heroic charity, and where she died at the age

[1] These researches were subsequently completed by others in different libraries of Flanders and Italy, especially in that of the Vatican and the Laurentian.

of twenty-four, he returned to pray over her profaned tomb, and painfully to gather some reminiscences from the mouth of a people who have renounced, with the faith of their fathers, all devotion to their benefactress.

The fruits of these long researches, of these pious pilgrimages, are contained in this book.

Often in wandering through our modernized cities, or through our provinces stripped of their ancient ornaments, where the monuments of the life of our ancestors are daily disappearing, the sight of some ruin which has escaped the hand of the destroyer — perhaps some statue buried in the soil, the arch of a doorway, or a broken rosette — will awaken the imagination; the mind as well as the eye is arrested; we are moved, and ask ourselves what part this fragment could have been in the whole structure; we permit ourselves to be drawn on involuntarily to reflection and study; little by little the entire edifice rises up before our mind, and when this work of interior reconstruction is completed we behold the abbey, the church, or the cathedral, standing forth in all its grandeur and beauty; we seem to wander beneath its majestic vaults, mingling in the crowd of faithful people, in the midst of the symbolic splendors and the ineffable harmonies of the ancient worship. Thus it was that he who has written this book, having travelled a long time through strange countries and bygone centuries, gathered these ruins, and offers them to those who have the same faith and the same affections that he has, to aid them to reconstruct in their thoughts the sublime edifice of Catholic ages.

Thanks to the numerous and truly precious monuments of the life of St. Elizabeth, which are left to us in the great historical collections of Germany, and in the manuscripts of the libraries of that country; thanks to the innumerable and very precise details concerning her that have been transmitted to us by writers, some contem-

porary, and others inspired by that charm which her character and her destiny are so well calculated to exert over every Catholic soul; thanks to this very rare combination of happy circumstances, I am enabled to propose to myself a double purpose in relating her life. While holding faithfully to the fundamental idea of a work of this character, which should be to give *the life of a saint*, a *legend* of the Ages of Faith, I may hope also to furnish a faithful picture of the customs and manners of society at an epoch when the empire of the Church and of chivalry was at the height of its glory. The general opinion has been, for a long time, that the history, even purely profane, of an era so important for the destinies of humanity cannot but gain in depth and accuracy from special researches relating to objects of the most fervent belief and the most cherished affection of the people of that time. I do not hesitate to say that in the history of the Middle Ages there are few biographies which afford greater assistance in such a study than that of St. Elizabeth. On the other hand, before speaking more at length of this Saint, and of the ideas which she represents, it seems proper that I should present a sketch of the state of Christianity at the time in which she lived; for everything in her life would be inexplicable to one who did not understand and appreciate that age. Not only was her career, her own and her family name, associated more or less intimately with many of the events of her time, but her character offers so many analogies with all that the world then witnessed upon a grander scale, that it is necessary to recall to my readers the distinguishing features of a social state in which her name occupied so honored a place. Let me then take their attention momentarily from her and direct it to her contemporaries and to her age.

She was born in 1207 and died in 1231. Her brief

career, therefore, fell in the midst of the first half of the thirteenth century, a period which was perhaps the most important, the most complete, and the most brilliant in the history of Catholic society.

In reviewing the glorious annals of the Church, it would be difficult to find — at least so it seems to me — an epoch in which her influence upon the world and upon the human race in all its developments was more extended, more fruitful, or more uncontested. Never, perhaps, had the Spouse of Christ reigned with such absolute dominion over the thoughts and hearts of the people. She beheld all the ancient elements, against which she had had to contend so long, overcome at last and transformed at her feet; the whole West acknowledged with a respectful love her sacred law. In the long struggles which, from her divine foundation, she had had to sustain against the passions and the repugnances of fallen humanity, never had she offered a more victorious resistance, or more energetically subdued them. Doubtless her victory was far from being complete; nor could it be so, since she is here in this world to fight, and awaits her triumph in heaven. But then certainly, more than at any other period of this severe conflict, the love of her children, their boundless devotion, their numbers and their courage, daily increasing, and the saints which she beheld constantly rising up in their ranks, offered to this immortal mother strength and consolation which she has since been but too cruelly deprived of.

The thirteenth century is the more remarkable in this respect from the fact that the close of the twelfth was far from auguring well for the succeeding century. In fact the echo of the great voice of St. Bernard, which seems to have completely filled that century, had grown feeble towards its close, and with it the external force of Catholic thought. The disastrous battle of Tiberias, the

loss of the true Cross, and the taking of Jerusalem by Saladin (1187) had made it evident that the West was conquered by the East upon the sacred soil which the Crusaders had redeemed. The debauchery and tyranny of Henry II of England, the assassination of St. Thomas à Becket, the captivity of Richard Cœur de Lion, the violence of Philip Augustus against his wife Ingelburga, the atrocious cruelties of the Emperor Henry VI in Sicily — all these triumphs of brute force indicated but too plainly a certain diminution of Catholic force, while the progress of the Vaudois and the Albigensian heresies, and the universal complaints against the remissness of the clergy and of the religious orders, revealed a dangerous malady in the bosom of the Church. But a glorious reaction was at hand. With the last years of this century (1198), we see ascending the throne of St. Peter a man possessing the force of mature years, who, under the name of Innocent III, was destined to fight with an invincible courage against all the adversaries of justice and of the Church, and to give to the world perhaps the most accomplished model of a Sovereign Pontiff, the type *par excellence* of the Vicar of Christ.

As this grand figure exerted a predominant influence upon the century which he inaugurated, I shall be pardoned if I attempt to trace some details of his character. Gracious and benevolent in his manners, gifted with rare physical beauty, full of trust and tenderness in his friendship, generous to excess in his charities and in his foundations, an eloquent and fertile orator, an ascetic and scholarly writer,[1] a poet even, as is demonstrated by the beautiful hymn, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, and the *Stabat Mater*, that sublime elegy, of which he was the author;[2] a great

[1] See his *Sermons*, and his treatises *De Contemptu Mundi*, and upon the *Seven Penitential Psalms*.

[2] As to the authorship of the *Stabat Mater*, see p. 91.

and profound jurisconsult, as it was fitting the judge of last resort of all Christianity should be; a zealous protector of the sciences; watching with severity over the maintenance of the laws of the Church and of her discipline, he possessed thus all the qualities which might have rendered his memory illustrious, even had he been intrusted with the government of the Church in a peaceful and undisturbed epoch, or if that government had been limited to the care of spiritual things only. But another mission was reserved for him. Before ascending the sacerdotal throne, he had comprehended, and even published in his works, the aim and destiny of the Supreme Pontificate, not only in relation to the salvation of souls and the preservation of Catholic truth, but in matters pertaining to the good government of Christian society. And yet, full of mistrust of himself, no sooner was he elected than he earnestly besought from all the priests of the Catholic universe special prayers that God might enlighten and fortify him; and God heard that universal prayer, and gave him the strength to pursue and accomplish the great work of St. Gregory VII.

While he was yet young and a student at the University of Paris, he had made a pilgrimage to Canterbury, to the tomb of St. Thomas the Martyr; and we can understand how much love he must have imbibed, near those sacred relics, for the liberty of the Church of which he was to become the victorious champion. But whilst he was defending this supreme liberty, the constitution of Europe at that period conferred upon him likewise the glorious office of watching over all the interests of the people, the maintenance of all their rights, and the accomplishment of all their duties. During his entire reign of eighteen years he was devoted to this colossal mission. Although unceasingly menaced and attacked by his own subjects, the turbulent citizens of Rome, he watched over

the Church and the Christian world with imperturbable severity, and with constant and vigilant solicitude, observing all with the eye of a father and a judge. From Iceland to Sicily, from Portugal to Armenia, no trangression of ecclesiastical law escaped his notice; no injury was inflicted upon the feeble without his demanding reparation; no legitimate right was attacked without his interposing his protection. For him the whole of Christendom was but a majestic unity, a single kingdom, without interior frontiers and without distinction of races, of which he was the intrepid defender from without, and the resolute and incorruptible judge within. To protect it against the attacks of exterior enemies, he awakened the declining ardor of the Crusades; he showed that he, more than any other, was consumed with that holy zeal to fight for the Cross which St. Gregory VII had been the first to feel, and which inflamed all the Roman pontiffs, to Pius II, who died a Crusader.

The heart of the Popes was then like a furnace, whence this ardor radiated over all the Christian nations; their eyes were open unceasingly to the dangers which threatened Europe; and while Innocent endeavored each year to launch some Christian army against the victorious Saracens in the East, in the North he propagated the Faith among the Slavonic and Sarmatian people; and in the West, by exhorting the kings of Spain to concord, and to a decisive effort against the Moors, he insured their miraculous victories. By the sole force of persuasion, and the authority of his great name, he brought the most distant kingdoms back to Catholic unity; such as Armenia and Bulgaria, which, though victorious over the Latin arms, did not hesitate to yield to the simple word of Innocent. To an exalted and indefatigable zeal for the truth, he knew how to unite the highest toleration for persons; he protected the Jews against the exactions of

their princes and the blind fury of their fellow citizens, as the living testimonials of Christian truth, imitating, moreover, in that respect all of his predecessors without exception; he corresponded even with the Mohammedan princes, in the interest of peace and of their salvation. While combating with rare perspicacity and with untiring perseverance the innumerable heresies which sprang up at that time and threatened the foundation of all social and moral order in the universe, he did not cease to urge moderation and clemency upon the victorious and irritated Catholics, including the bishops themselves. He sought for a long time, by means of gentleness and by the spirit of reconciliation, to reunite the separated Church of the East with that of the West; and then, when the unlooked-for success of the Fourth Crusade, in overthrowing the Byzantine Empire, had forcibly compelled that misguided half of the Christian world to submit to his authority, and thus had doubled his power, he recommended clemency toward the conquered Church; and far from expressing any sentiment of joy or pride on learning of that conquest, he refused to participate in the glory and the triumph of the conquerors; he repelled all their excuses and all their religious pretexts, because in their enterprise they had ignored the laws of justice and forgotten the tomb of Christ! For him religion and justice were everything, and he had identified his life with them. His soul was inflamed with a passionate love of justice, which no respect for persons, nor any obstacle or reverse, could diminish or restrain, counting success or defeat alike as nothing, when a question of right was involved in any case. He was mild and merciful toward the weak and the vanquished, inflexible with the powerful and the proud; everywhere and at all times the protector of the oppressed, of weakness and equity against triumphant and unjust power.

Thus we see him defending with a noble inflexibility the sanctity of the marriage tie, as the keystone of society and of Christian life. No outraged wife ever implored in vain his powerful intervention.

The world saw him with admiration fighting during fifteen years against his friend and ally, Philip Augustus, in defence of the rights of the unfortunate Ingelburga, who, leaving her home in Denmark, had come into a strange land, only to become the object of the contempt of that prince. There she found herself alone, imprisoned, and abandoned by all except the Supreme Pontiff, who succeeded at last in effecting her restoration to the throne of her husband, amid the acclamations of the people, who rejoiced to see that there existed even in this world a justice equally severe for all.[1]

It was in the same spirit that he watched with paternal solicitude over the destinies of royal orphans, the legitimate heirs to crowns. We see that he was able to maintain in their rights and inheritance the princes of Norway, of Poland, and of Armenia (1199), the *infantas* of Portugal, the young King Ladislas of Hungaria, and even the sons of the enemies of the Church, such as James of Aragon, whose father had been killed fighting for heretics, and who, a captive himself of the Catholic army, was liberated by order of Innocent; such likewise as Frederick II, the sole heir of the imperial race of Hohenstaufen, the most formidable rival of the Holy See, who, left an orphan under the protection of Innocent, was brought up, instructed, and defended by him, and maintained in his patrimony with the affection and devotion of a father, rather than of a guardian. Above all, he

[1] In like manner he was the successful defender of Queen Mary of Aragon, who had become tiresome to her debauched husband; and of Queen Adelaide of Bohemia, whose husband was anxious to repudiate her, in order to make a more advantageous marriage, and whom a council had already condemned.

appears admirable to us when he offers an asylum, at the foot of his throne, to the aged Raymond of Toulouse, the ancient and obstinate enemy of Catholicism, and to his young son; when he pleads himself their cause against the prelates and the victorious Crusaders; when, after lavishing the most tender counsels upon this young prince, and having tried in vain to appease his conquerors, he assigned to him in spite of their murmurs, Comtat and Provence, that the innocent son, whose guilty father had been stripped of his possessions, might not be without patrimony.

Is it astonishing that, at a period when Faith was regarded as the foundation of all thrones, and when justice thus personified was seated on the throne of Peter, kings sought to ally themselves therewith by the strongest possible ties; that the valiant Peter of Aragon felt that he could in no way better secure the recently acquired independence of his crown than in crossing the seas to deposit it at the feet of Innocent, and receive it as a vassal from his hands; that John of England, pursued by the just indignation of his people, proclaimed himself also a vassal of that Church which he had so cruelly persecuted, sure of finding there a refuge and a pardon, which elsewhere had been refused him; that, besides these two kingdoms, those of Navarre, Portugal, Scotland, Hungary, and Denmark should esteem it an honor to attach themselves in a certain way to the Holy See by a special bond of protection? All knew that Innocent respected the rights of kings in relation to the Church, as much as those of the Church herself against kings. Like his illustrious predecessors, he united an exalted and prudent policy with his devotion to the cause of justice; like them, in opposing the succession of the empire in the house of Swabia, and in sustaining the liberty of elections in Germany, he saved that noble country from mo-

narchical centralization, which would have changed her nature and stifled the germs of that prodigious intellectual fecundity of which she justly prides herself; like them, in re-establishing and defending with immovable firmness the temporal authority of the Holy See, he guaranteed the independence of Italy, no less than that of the Church.

By his precepts and his example he shaped a whole generation of primates, equally devoted to this independence, and worthy to be his auxiliaries, such as Stephen Langton in England, Henry of Gnesen in Poland, Roderic of Toledo in Spain, Foulquet of Toulouse in the midst of heretics; or worthy to die as martyrs in this holy cause, such as Saint Peter Parentis and Peter of Castelnau.[1] His glorious life terminated with the celebrated Council of Lateran (1215), which he convoked and presided over; where all the bonds of the Church were more closely drawn together; where the *judgments of God*, which had degenerated into an abuse of force, were definitively abolished; where Easter communion was prescribed; where that system of criminal procedure[2] was established which has served as a model for those of all secular tribunals; and where the Christian world was first made acquainted, as it were, with those two great orders, of St. Dominic and St. Francis, which were destined to animate it with a new life, both of which Innocent III had the glory of seeing founded during his pontificate.[3] The successors of this great pontiff did not degenerate. During nearly half a century they presented the

[1] Killed by heretics, the first at Orvieto in 1199, the second in Languedoc in 1209.

[2] In the eighth canon of this council.

[3] As is well known, the Protestant writer, M. Hurter, in his *History of Innocent III and his Contemporaries*, has raised a monument to the glory of the great pontiff, and to that of the Church, which merits the recognition of all the friends of truth.

sublime spectacle of a conflict, sustained only by the forces of faith and justice, against all the resources of human genius and power, concentrated in the Emperor Frederick II, and employed to achieve the triumph of material forces. Honorius III was the first who had to contend with this ungrateful ward of the Holy See. Gentle and patient, he seemed to be placed between two imperious and inflexible combatants, Innocent III and Gregory IX, as if to show how far apostolic forbearance could go. His example was an eloquent appeal to kings. He exhausted his resources to defray the expenses of the Crusade. He had the happiness of solemnly confirming the three holy orders, which were in some sort to enkindle a new furnace of charity and faith in the hearts of Christian people: the Dominicans (1226), the Franciscans (1223), and the Carmelites (1226).

In spite, however, of his gentleness, he found himself obliged to place the Emperor for the first time under the ban of the Church, leaving to Gregory IX the task of continuing the struggle. The latter, an octogenarian when he assumed the tiara (1227), exhibited, during the fifteen years of his reign, the most indomitable energy, as if he had renewed his youth in becoming the depositary of a power delegated by the Eternal. He was the protector and friend of St. Elizabeth, by whom I was lead into the study of this century; he drew her to St. Francis of Assisi, whose heroic virtues she was able to imitate; he protected her when a widow and forsaken; and when God had called her to Himself, he proclaimed her right to the perpetual veneration of the faithful by inscribing her name on the roll of the saints. Among all ranks he was the universal protector of the weak and the oppressed; and while he promised his support to the royal widow of Thuringia, he extended his paternal solicitude to the poorest serfs of the most remote countries of Christendom; as

we see by his letter to the Polish lords, in which he reproaches them, as with a detestable crime, for wearing out the lives of their vassals, redeemed and ennobled by the blood of Jesus Christ, in guarding their falcons, or birds of prey.

A zealous friend of true science, he founded the University of Toulouse, and caused the re-establishment of that of Paris by St. Louis; not, however, without having wisely protested against the introduction of profane philosophy into theology. By his collection of the decretals he had the glory of giving to the Church her code, which became then also that of society in general. Worthy nephew, as he was, of Innocent III, he knew well how to unite justice with firmness. Being reconciled with Frederick II, after having previously excommunicated him, he sustained him with a noble impartiality against the revolution of his son Henry (1235), and even against the excessive demands of the cities of Lombardy, although these latter were the best allies of the Church (1237). When later on the Emperor violated his most solemn pledges, and it became necessary to excommunicate him a second time, what an admirable sight it was to behold this old man, almost a centenarian, engaging fearlessly in a desperate contest, and at the same time recommending to the army of John of Brienne, which was marching against the perfidious Emperor, clemency, moderation, and the protection of prisoners. Then, defeated and abandoned by all, besieged in Rome by Frederick, who was in league with the Romans themselves against him, he displayed in this terrible crisis, and in the midst of human weakness, a strength which is to be looked for only in things divine. He caused the relics of the Holy Apostles to be brought forth and borne in procession through the city, and asked the Romans whether they were willing to see this sacred deposit perish, which he could not defend without their assistance. At

once their hearts were touched; they swore to die for him; the Emperor was repulsed and the Church delivered. His successor, Innocent IV (1242), who up to the time of his election had been the friend and partisan of Frederick, from the moment of his elevation sacrificed his previous alliance to the sacred mission which had been intrusted to him, and to that admirable unity of views which had governed his predecessors during two centuries. Pursued, threatened, and hemmed in on all sides by the imperial lines which, on the North and on the South, from Germany and from Sicily, made Rome a prison for him, it was absolutely necessary that he should escape. Where should he find shelter? All the kings, even St. Louis, refused it to him. Fortunately Lyons was free and belonged only to an independent archbishop. There Innocent assembled around him, in general council, all the bishops who could escape from tyranny, and his brothers the cardinals. To the latter he gave the red cape, to show them that they ought always to be ready to shed their blood for the Church. And then, from the midst of this supreme tribunal, which Frederick had invoked and recognized, and before which his advocates had appeared solemnly to plead his cause, the fugitive Pontiff fulminated sentence of deposition against the most powerful sovereign in the world as the oppressor of religious liberty and the despoiler of the Church, as a heretic and a tyrant.[1] An ever memorable triumph of right over might, of faith over material interests, the third act in the sacred drama in which Gregory VII and Alexander III had already crushed under foot the rebellious elements, amid the acclamations of heaven and earth!

We know how Providence took upon itself the ratification of that sentence. History tells us of the downfall and

[1] Upon his tomb at Naples we read this verse: "Stravit inimicum Christi colubrum Fredericum."

of the last days of Frederick; the premature death of his son, and the total ruin of that formidable race. An admirable mark of the absolute confidence inspired by the integrity of the Holy See is afforded us in the fact that, as formerly Frederick himself, an orphan from his birth, had been left to the protection of Innocent III, the relatives and the allies of his grandson Conradin, the last and unfortunate offspring of the house of Swabia, were unwilling to confide his guardianship to any other than the Pontiff who had deposed his grandfather, and who administered loyally the trust up to the moment that it was seized from him by the perfidy of Manfred.

The contest was continued against the latter, and against all the enemies of the Church, with the same intrepidity and the same perseverance, under Alexander IV (1254), a worthy representative of that family, the Conti, which had already given to the world an Innocent III and a Gregory IX; and after him under Urban IV (1261), the son of a shoemaker, who, far from being ashamed of his origin, had a picture of his father working at his trade painted on the Church windows of Troyes; who had the glory of finding new food for Catholic piety in the institution of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament (1264); and who, immovable in the midst of the greatest dangers, died without knowing where to lay his head, leaving to the Church the protection of the brother of St. Louis and a French kingdom in the Sicilies. This conquest was achieved under Clement IV, who sought in vain to save the life of Conradin, the innocent and expiatory victim of his guilty family. And thus terminated for a time that noble war of the Church against secular oppression, which was destined to be resumed, with very different success, though with no less glory, under Boniface VIII.

It must not be forgotten that while these great pontiffs were devoting their utmost energies to the prosecution of

this war, far from being absorbed by it, they were giving to the interior organization of the Church and of society all the care that would have been possible in a state of profound peace. They continued, one after the other, with an invincible perseverance, the gigantic work with which they had been charged since the downfall of the Roman Empire, the work of molding and shaping all the diverse elements of the Germanic and northern nations who had conquered and reanimated Europe, of distinguishing all there was in them of good, pure and salutary, that it might be sanctified and civilized, and of rejecting all that was really barbarous. At the same time, and with the same constancy, they labored for the propagation of knowledge and education, and placed them within the reach of all; they consecrated the natural equality of the human race by bestowing the highest dignities of the Church upon men born in the lowest classes, provided only they were possessed of virtue and knowledge; they elaborated and promulgated the magnificent code of ecclesiastical legislation, and established that clerical jurisdiction, the benefits of which were all the more apparent from the fact that it was the only one which, at that time, recognized neither torture nor cruel punishment of any kind, and alone made no distinction of persons among Christians. No doubt, in the bosom of the Church which had such leaders, many human miseries were to be found mingled with such grandeur and sanctity; nor will it ever be otherwise, so long as divine things are intrusted to mortal hands; but we may doubt, I think, whether any other period has been more exempt from them, and whether the rights of God and those of humanity were ever defended with more noble courage and by more illustrious champions.

By the side of this majestic Church there existed the *Second Majesty*, to which the people of that time did

homage, — the Holy Roman Empire, of which all secondary kingdoms seemed but offshoots.

Unfortunately since the extinction of the house of Saxony, in the eleventh century, it had become the appanage of two families, in which the grand and pious genius of Charlemagne had gradually disappeared, those of Franconia and Swabia. In place of this they had substituted a new spirit, impatient of all spiritual restraint, arrogant and proud in the strength alone of arms and of feudal supremacy, tending always to a confusion of the two powers and to an absorption of the Church in the Empire. This pernicious tendency, overcome by Gregory VII in Henry IV, and by Alexander III in Frederick Barbarossa, was renewed in Frederick II; but he, too, found his conquerors in the Holy See.

The influence of Frederick II was predominant throughout the half century which was embraced, almost entirely, within his reign.[1] It seems to me impossible, even for the most prejudiced mind, not to be struck by the great difference between the beginning of his reign, when he was faithful to the Church of Rome, which had so scrupulously watched over his minority,[2] and the last twenty years of his life, which saw all the many glories that had surrounded his youth gradually fade away. It would be difficult to conceive of anything more brilliant, more poetic, and more imposing than that imperial court, presided over by a prince so young, gifted with every quality of mind and body, an enthusiast of the arts, of poetry, and of knowledge, familiar with six languages and versed in a multitude of sciences, granting to the kingdom of Sicily, whilst the Pope was crowning him at Rome (1220), a wise code of laws, enlightened and remarkable for their

[1] King of Sicily in 1198, Emperor in 1215, he died in 1250.

[2] Innocent III, Honorius III, and Gregory IX all assisted in his education; the first as Pope, the other two as cardinals.

harmony; and later on, after his reconciliation with the Holy See, publishing at Mentz the first laws of Germany in her national language, drawing around him the élite of the chivalry of his vast dominions, giving them an example of valor and of poetical talent, in his beautiful palaces of Sicily, where were found side by side the diverse elements of German, Italian, and Oriental civilization. It was this mélange that ruined him. He would have been, says a chronicler, without a rival on the earth, *had he but loved his own soul.*[1] But a fatal penchant drew him to the manners of the East. He who, it was at one time supposed, was about to marry St. Elizabeth when she had become a widow, and who sued for the hand of St. Agnes of Bohemia,[2] shortly after shut himself up in a shameful seraglio, surrounded by Saracenic guards.

Beside this moral sensualism he soon proclaimed a sort of political materialism, which was, to say the least, premature in the thirteenth century; he subverted all the ideas of the Christian world in going to the Holy Sepulchre as the ally of Mohammedan princes, and no longer as the conqueror of the Holy Land. On his return to Europe, not satisfied with the exalted position of Christian Emperor, foremost among the powerful and strong, not the mere master of a population of slaves, respected as a friend of the Church, not her oppressor, he sowed in society the germs of pernicious doctrines which have since borne but too well their natural fruit. Inebriated with power, like Louis XIV and Napoleon at later periods, the intervention of any spiritual authority was irksome to him, and he announced through his chancellor, Pietro

[1] Salimbeni, ap. Raumer, III, 48.

[2] She refused him in order to become a Franciscan. The Emperor, on learning it, said: "Had she preferred any other man to me, I would have had my revenge; but since it is God that she has preferred, I have nothing to say."

delle Vigne, that the right to dispose of all things, human and divine, belonged to the Emperor.

The age was still too thoroughly Christian to tolerate such an invasion of the vital prerogatives of Christianity. To exercise supremacy over the convictions and the imagination of men needed a different spirit, even in the secular power; and such was found in St. Louis. We see Frederick, who, according to the words of the holy king, had *employed his talents to wage war against God,* struck by the thunderbolts of the Church, distinguishing himself more and more each day by his cruelty, perfidy, and duplicity;[1] oppressing his people with taxations and fines; causing them, by the excess of his debaucheries, to doubt his faith; and dying at last in a remote part of Itay, whither he had retired, smothered by his own son,[2] in the midst of Saracens, whose attachment only rendered him the more suspected to the Christians.

Under his reign, as under that of his predecessors, Germany, which saw but little of him, was in a flourishing condition. She witnessed in Bavaria the growth of the power of the dukes of Wittelsbach; she admired the splendor of the princes of Austria, of Frederick the Victorious, of Leopold the Glorious, of whom it was said that he was *brave as a lion and modest as a girl;* she

[1] For example, the execution of the son of the doge Tiepolo, that of the Bishop of Arezzo, or the imprisonment of the cardinals who attended the council which he himself had asked for.

[2] The circumstances of his death are variously related. Döllinger says: "Loaded with the heavy weight of his crimes, and with the sentence of the Church still upon him, he died in 1250 at Florentino in Lower Italy." Alzog says: "While on his way, at the head of a powerful army, to the deliverance of Enzio (his son) Frederick died Dec. 13, 1250. He made his confession to the Archbishop of Palermo, by whom he was absolved from the ban of the Church, and, at his own request, was buried in the cathedral of that city." Other accounts say that Manfred (his natural son) poisoned both his brother Conrad IV and his father. [Translator.]

extolled the virtues of the house of Thuringia, under the father-in-law and the husband of St. Elizabeth; she saw in Archbishop Engelbert of Cologne [1] a martyr to justice and to the public safety, whom the Church hastened to place in the number of her saints. Her cities, like those of the Low Countries, developed with a powerful and prosperous individuality; Cologne and Lubeck were at the height of their influence, and the Hanseatic League was just springing into existence. Her legislation developed with grandeur in the two Mirrors of Saxony and Swabia, and in numerous other local codes, all based upon respect for private rights and established ideas, and breathing a noble mixture of Christian thought with the elements of ancient German law, unaltered as yet by the Ghibelline importation of Roman law. Finally she counted already among her heroes a real Christian monarch. Rudolph of Hapsburg grew up in silence under the shadow of the throne of Hohenstaufen,[2] and was worthy to be the founder of an imperial race; for he saved his country from anarchy, and proved himself before the world to be a true representative of Charlemagne. One might have foretold his reign when at his consecration, finding no sceptre at hand, he seized the crucifix upon the altar and exclaimed, "This is my sceptre; I wish no other!"

If the Empire seemed to have departed from its natural path, France, on the other hand, replaced it in some sort, taking from it that character of sanctity and grandeur which was destined to shed so much lustre upon the most Christian kingdom. But she, too, nursed in her bosom a deep wound, which had to be healed at any cost, in order that her unity and her grand destiny might not

[1] Killed in 1225 by the Count of Altena.

[2] He was presented at the baptismal font by Frederick II in May, 1218. Raumer, III, 275.

be forever compromised. I refer to that hotbed of heresies, the enemy of society as well as of religion, which defiled the South, and had become rooted in the corrupt masses that have been designated under the name of Albigenses. At the present day there is no difficulty in forming a correct idea of the morals and the doctrines of these men, who had as their worthy representatives princes whose debaucheries make one shudder, and whom false historians have for so long a time defended at the expense of truth and religion. We know that if they were persecuted, they were no less persecutors themselves;[1] that at best they were transgressors against the common law of society at that period. Not only France, but Spain as well, and Italy, would have been lost to the Faith and to true civilization if the crusade had not been successfully waged against this impure system of pagan and oriental doctrines. Undoubtedly, in the effort to crush this rebellion against Christianity, deplorable means were but too often resorted to, such as Christian charity must abhor, and which the Holy See always reprobated, even in the heat of the contest. But it is acknowledged now that these cruelties were at least reciprocated; and, so far as I am aware, no method has yet been devised for waging war, and especially a religious war, with kindness and amenity. He who was recognized as the champion of Catholicism in this terrible conflict, Simon of Montfort, undoubtedly tarnished in some measure his glory by a too great ambition, and by a severity which good faith cannot excuse; yet there remains much to his honor which Catholics need not hesitate to extol unreservedly.

History certainly presents few characters as great as his for will, perseverance, courage, and contempt of death. And when we reflect upon the fervor and humility of his

[1] See Michelet's *Hist. of France*, II, 470; and especially the *Life of St. Dominic* by Father Lacordaire.

piety, the inviolable purity of his morals, and that inflexible devotion to ecclesiastical authority which induced him to retire alone from the camp of the Crusaders before Zara, because the Pope had forbidden him to fight against the Christians, we can imagine the excess of his indignation against those who disturbed peace of conscience and destroyed all the restraints of morality. His character, as well as the age in which he lived, is well described in the words which he used when about to engage in an unequal contest: "The whole Church is praying for me; defeat were impossible." And on another occasion, when pursued by the enemy, having with his cavalry forded a river which his infantry were unable to cross, he himself returned with only five men, exclaiming, "The poor soldiers of Christ are exposed to death, and I would remain in safety! Let the will of the Lord be accomplished concerning me; I shall certainly go with them!"

The decisive victory of Muret (1212), which assured the triumph of the Faith, also indicates to us, by the contrast of its two principal personages, the nature of the contest; one of them, Montfort, at the head of a handful of combatants, seeking in prayer and the sacraments the right to expect a victory which could be but a miracle; the other, Peter of Aragon, coming forth, weakened by debauchery, to be defeated and killed amidst a numerous army. Whilst this conflict was progressing, and preparing the way for the reunion of the conquered provinces with the crown of France, a king worthy of his surname, Philip Augustus, illustrated the crown with the first rays of a glory and a moral influence, founded upon religion, which it was destined to preserve for a long time. Being asked, in his youth, of what he was thinking during his long and frequent reveries, he replied: "I am thinking of how to restore to France the power and splendor which she possessed under Charlemagne." And during his long and

glorious reign he never ceased to show himself faithful to that great thought. The reunion of Normandy and the provinces wrested from the assassin John Lackland constituted the real foundation of the power of the French monarchs. After having given evidence of his loyalty to the Christian cause in the crusade, he showed himself during the whole of his life to be the friend and staunchest support of the Church;[1] a proof of which he gave, by the most painful sacrifice, in overcoming his deep-seated repugnance to the wife whom Rome required him to acknowledge. Reconciled with his people by his reconciliation with her, he soon received a reward from heaven in the great victory of Bovines (1215), a religious as well as a national victory, gained over the enemies of the Church as well as of France. This fact is sufficiently established by all that history has recorded concerning the impious projects of the confederates, all of whom were excommunicated; by the earnest prayers of the priests during the combat, and by the beautiful words of Philip to his soldiers: "The Church is praying for us; I go forth to fight for her, for France, and for you." Around him fought all the heroes of the chivalry of France, — Matthew of Montmorency, Enguerraud de Coucy, William des Barres, and Guérin de Seulis, a prelate, a minister, and a warrior at one and the same time. After the defeat of the enemy they associated themselves with their king for the purpose of founding, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, the abbey of Our Lady of Victory, which was destined to consecrate, under the patronage of Mary, the memory of a victory which had saved the independence of France.

The prestige of the French monarchy, and its supremacy over the southern provinces, which it eventually absorbed, only increased under the brief but prosperous reign of Louis VIII, who died a victim of his chastity; as well

[1] He never fought on Sunday.

as under the regency of Blanche of Castile, as tender a mother as she was courageous and wise a sovereign, who declared that she would prefer to see all of her children dead rather than have them commit a single mortal sin, and was, at the same time, no less watchful over their temporal advancement. She was the very worthy object of the romantic love of Thibaut of Champagne, the poet king, and cherished herself a tender regard for St. Elizabeth.[1] Her regency was a worthy harbinger of the reign of St. Louis, that model of kings, whom history honors as the most accomplished character perhaps of modern times, while Christianity honors in him the union of all the virtues which merit heaven. In reading the history of this life, at once so sublime and so beautiful, one asks himself if ever the King of heaven had upon earth a more faithful servant than this angel, crowned for a time with a mortal crown, to show the world how man may be transformed by faith and love. What Christian heart would not be moved with admiration in contemplating all that filled the heart of St. Louis; that sentiment of duty so strong and so pure; that exalted and scrupulous regard for justice; that exquisite delicacy of conscience which led him to repudiate the illegitimate acquisitions of his predecessors, at the expense even of the public safety and of the affections of his subjects; that intense love of his neighbor with which his heart overflowed, and which, after being lavished upon his beloved wife, his mother, and his brothers, whose death he mourned bitterly, reached even to the lowest of his subjects, inspired him with a tender solicitude for the souls of others, and led him, during his leisure hours, to the cottage of the poor, whom he himself consoled! And yet, with all these saintly virtues, he was brave to the point of rashness; he was the best chevalier as well as the best Christian in France,

[1] See Chapter XXXIII.

as he proved himself at Taillebourg and at Mansoura. Why should he fear to fight and die, he who had bound himself, as it were, by a compact with divine and human justice, and had given proof of his fidelity thereto by his severity towards his own brother; he who, before embarking on the Crusade, was not ashamed to send out, through every part of his kingdom, mendicant friars, charged to inquire, among the poorest classes, whether any wrong had been done them in the king's name, and if so, to make adequate reparation at the the king's expense? And, as if he were the personification of supreme justice, he was chosen as arbitrator in all the great disputes of his time between the Pope and the Emperor, and between the barons of England and their king. Even while held a captive by the infidels, he was chosen by them as their judge. Twice after his captivity his love of Christ led him into pagan lands, and there he met with his death. It was a sort of martyrdom, the only one permitted him, and indeed the only death worthy of him. On his deathbed he dictated to his son his memorable instructions, the most beautiful words ever uttered from the mouth of a king. Just before breathing his last, he was heard to whisper in a low voice, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" Was it to the celestial, or to the earthly city, that he addressed this exclamation of regret, or of sublime hope? He had been unwilling to enter the latter under treaty and without his army, lest his example should authorize the other Christian kings to do the same. But not one of them went there after him. He was the last of the royal Crusaders, of the really Christian kings, entitled to that name, and he had been the greatest among them. He has left us two immortal monuments, his oratory and his tomb,— the *Sainte-Chapelle* and the *Saint-Denis*, both pure and simple, and like his own soul towering heavenward. He has left one yet more beautiful and

immortal in the memory of the people, — the oak of Vincennes.

In England the perverse race of Norman kings, all of them oppressors of their people, and all bitter oppressors of the Church, could oppose to Philip Augustus only the infamous John Lackland, and to St. Louis only the pale and feeble Henry III. But if royalty there was a scandal, the Church appeared in all her splendor, and the nation successfully defended her most important privileges. The English Church had been especially favored with a succession of great men in the metropolitan see of Canterbury, such as have, perhaps, no parallel in her annals. Stephen Langton, during the reign of John, was the worthy successor of St. Dunstan, Lanfranc, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas à Becket, and the worthy representative of Innocent III. After having defended with invincible intrepidity the ecclesiastical franchises, he placed himself at the head of the insurgent barons, who having united their forces in the army of *God and the Holy Church*, wrested from the king the celebrated *Magna Charta*, the groundwork of that English Constitution which modern ages have admired so much; forgetting, no doubt, that it was but the product of the feudal system, and that this same charter, far from being an innovation, was but a rehabilitation of the laws of St. Edward, and a confirmation of the public law of all Europe at that period, based upon the maintenance of all ancient and personal rights. Under Henry III also, whom the Holy See alone maintained upon his tottering throne, preventing its union with France by the conquest of the son of Philip Augustus, the Church had her courageous defenders and her noble victims in St. Edmund of Canterbury, who died in exile in 1242, and St. Richard of Winchester; and the nation succeeded in conquering her liberties under the leadership of the noble son of Simon of Montfort, brave and pious

like his father, who was defeated and killed at the close of his career, but not until he had made a crusade of this popular war, and succeeded in introducing the deputies of the people into the first political assembly that bore the name, which afterwards became so glorious, of the *British Parliament* (1258).

About the same time, in Scotland, we see the pious King William, the ally of Innocent III, in order to give a proof of his love for the Church and the Blessed Virgin, ordaining that the poor people should rest from their labors every Saturday after midday (1202).

In the Scandinavian kingdoms the thirteenth century opened under the great Archbishop Absalon of Lund (1201), an intrepid warrior, as well as a prelate, the benefactor and civilizer of these nations. Sweden grew under the grandson of St. Eric; and Norway, where traces of the ancient Germanic constitution were best preserved, enjoyed under Haco V (1217–1263), her principal legislator, a repose to which she had been unaccustomed. Waldemar the Victorious (1202–1252), the most illustrious of the kings of Denmark, extended his dominion over all the southern countries of the Baltic; and anticipating the compact of Calmar, conceived, and was on the point of executing, the grand project of uniting under one rule all the states bordering on the Baltic, when the battle of Bornhoveden (1227) gave the Germanic races the ascendency over the Scandinavians. But throughout the course of his conquests he never lost sight of the duty of converting the pagans, to which the Holy See unceasingly exhorted him. His efforts for the propagation of the Faith in Livonia were aided by those of the order of Sword-Bearers, founded especially for this purpose (1203), and later by those of the Teutonic order. The transfer of the principal forces of this last order into Prussia, to implant Christianity there, was an occurrence of great

importance in the history of religion and civilization in Northern Europe; and if human passions were too often apparent in this crusade, which lasted two centuries, we must bear in mind that through it alone was Christianity successful in acquiring an influence over these obstinate races; and we must admire all that the Popes did to mitigate the hardships of the conquest.[1] Poland, too, in like manner, was already laying the foundations of the *Orthodox Kingdom*.[2] The Archbishop Henry of Gnesen, the legate of Innocent III, re-established there ecclesiastical discipline and liberty against the attacks of Duke Ladislas. St. Hedwiges, aunt of St. Elizabeth, gave there an example, on the throne, of the most austere virtues, and offered as a sacrifice to God her son, who died a martyr to his faith, fighting against the Tartars.

Poland, in opposing to these terrible hordes who had enslaved Russia and overrun Hungary a bulwark which they were never able to overcome, was obliged to shed torrents of her blood during the whole of this century, and thus became, what she has ever since been, the glorious victim of Christianity.

Directing our attention again to the South of Europe, and contemplating Italy, which was the most animated and brilliant of the Christian nations, we are painfully impressed in the first place by the spectacle of the cruel and interminable conflicts between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, and the intense feelings of hatred engendered by the war for those principles which gave rise to these parties. This baneful element of hate seems to be a predominant feature in the history of Italy at all periods. It was associated with I hardly know what pagan and egoistic policy, a relic of the days of the Roman Republic,

[1] In 1249 a legate of the Pope went to Prussia to secure to the conquered people the freedom of marriage, of successions, etc.

[2] A title which has since been accorded by the Popes to Poland.

which throughout the Middle Ages prevailed in the hearts of the Italians over the idea of the Church or of the Empire, and which robbed them of much of the salutary influence of the Holy See, whose loyal subjects they should have been before all others, and whose power and devotion they had had occasion to appreciate during the contest of the Lombard cities against the emperors.

But however painful the contemplation of these disorders which rent the heart of Italy, it is impossible not to admire the extraordinary energy, moral and physical, the fervor of patriotism, and the depths of convictions, which are impressed upon the history of each of the innumerable republics which divided her territory. We are amazed at the marvellous wealth of monuments, public institutions, and foundations, and the immense number of great men of every kind, warriors, poets, and artists, that flourished in each of those cities of Italy, which to-day are so deserted and depopulated. Never, certainly, since the golden ages of ancient Greece, had there been witnessed so vigorous a development of the human will, so wonderful a power given to the works of man, or so much life in so small a space. But when we think of the prodigies of sanctity which the thirteenth century witnessed in Italy, we realize what the bond was that held together all those impetuous hearts ; we are reminded of that river of Christian charity which flowed always, deep and unfathomable, beneath those storms and billows. In the midst of this universal mêlée, cities were built and enriched ; their population was, in many cases, tenfold that of the present day ; masterpieces of art were produced ; and in commerce, and especially in the sciences, they made constant progress.[1] Unlike the German states, all political and

[1] The celebrated University of Padua was founded in 1222 ; that of Vicenza in 1202 ; Vercelli in 1228 ; Treviso in 1260, and Naples in 1224.

social existence was concentrated in the ranks of the nobility in the cities, none of which, however, was sufficiently pre-eminent to absorb the life of the others; and this generous rivalry between them may explain in part the extraordinary force which they had at their command. The league of the Lombard cities, triumphant ever since the peace of Constance, braved successfully all the efforts of the imperial power. The Crusades had given an incalculable impetus to the commerce and prosperity of the maritime republics of Genoa and Venice. The latter especially, under her doge Enrico Dandolo, an octogenarian and a blind hero, became a power of the first rank by the conquest of Constantinople and the fairest portion of the Empire of the East, which was for so long a time her pride. The league of the Tuscan cities, sanctioned by Innocent III, afforded a new guarantee to the existence of those cities whose history is worthy of the greatest empires; such as Pisa, Lucca, Sienna, which was solemnly dedicated to the Blessed Virgin before the glorious victory of Arbia; and Florence especially, perhaps the most interesting single state of modern times. On every page of the annals of all these cities we find evidence of the most touching piety, as well as of the most generous devotion to country. To cite a single instance out of a thousand, when we see a people complaining, as did the citizens of Ferrara, that they are not assessed sufficiently for the wants of the country, we hardly have the courage to be severe towards institutions which produced so exalted a degree of disinterestedness and patriotism. Contemporaneously with this movement, purely Italian, we know that the great contest between the spiritual and temporal power was more violent there than in any other part; and certainly the fact that the latter was reduced to the necessity of being represented by the atrocious Eccelin, lieutenant of Frederick II, is evidence of the

moral superiority of the cause of the Church. Southern Italy, under the sceptre of the house of Swabia, owed to Frederick II and his chancellor, Pietro delle Vigne, the benefits of a wise and complete legislation and all the splendor of poetry and the arts. But at the same time it was overrun by the Saracenic colonies of the Emperor and his son Manfred, until Rome called there a new French race, the house of Anjou, who came, as at another time did the gallant Normans, to guarantee the independence of the Church and to close the gates of Europe against the infidels.

But if the Catholic historian cannot escape a certain feeling of sadness in forming his judgment of Italy, he finds in Spain of the thirteenth century only subjects of unmingled admiration. It was in every respect the heroic age of that noble nation, the age when she was worthy to conquer, not only her own soil and her own independence, but likewise the glorious title of the *Catholic Monarchy*. First, in Aragon, one of the two grand divisions of the peninsula, after Peter III, — a king who, as we have seen, voluntarily received his crown from Innocent III, yet who fell fighting against the Church at Muret, — we find his son, Don James the Conqueror, whose wife was a sister of St. Elizabeth; who merited his surname by capturing Majorca and Valencia from the Moors; who, like Cæsar, wrote his own chronicle, and who during a reign of sixty-four years, full of conflicts, was never defeated, won thirty victories, and founded two thousand churches. In Castile the century opened under the reign of Alfonso the Short, the founder of the Order of St. James and of the University of Salamanca, those two glories of Spain. He was supported by the illustrious Roderic Ximenes, Archbishop of Toledo (1208–1215), a worthy precursor of him who, two centuries later, immortalized this same name. Like so many other prelates of this character, he was an intrepid

warrior, a profound politician, an eloquent preacher, an accurate historian, and a most generous almoner. This king and this primate were the heroes of that memorable day of las Navas de Tolosa (July 16, 1212), on which Spain did for Europe what France had done under Charles Martel, and what, at a later day, Poland did under Sobieski; when she saved Europe from the irruption of four hundred thousand Mussulmen who attacked her from the rear. The Empire of the Crescent was broken from the date of that glorious victory, which was the true type of a Christian battle, and was consecrated in the memory of the people by miraculous traditions. The great Innocent III felt that he could not more worthily celebrate the event than by the institution of the feast of the *Triumph of the Cross*, which is still observed on the same day in Spain. Alfonso was succeeded by St. Ferdinand, a contemporary and an own cousin of St. Louis. He proved himself to be not unworthy of this illustrious kinship, for, like Louis, with all the glories of the Christian soldier he united all the virtues of the saint; and with the tenderest love of his people, the most ardent love of God. He would never consent to burden his people with new imposts.

"God will provide by other means for our defence," he said. "I fear the malediction of a poor woman more than the whole army of the Moors!" Nevertheless, he prosecuted with unparalleled success the work of liberating the country. He took Cordova, the seat of the Western Caliphate, and after dedicating the principal mosque to the Blessed Virgin, ordered the clocks to be returned to Compostella on the shoulders of the Moors, which the Caliph Almanzor had brought thence on the shoulders of the Christians. He conquered the Kingdom of Murcia in 1240, that of Jaen in 1246, and finally that of Seville in 1248, leaving only Grenada to the Arabs. And yet, humble in the midst of so much glory, as he lay stretched

upon his deathbed he wrote, with tears, these words: "O my divine Saviour! Thou hast suffered so much for the love of me, and I, wretched creature, what have I done for the love of Thee!"

Spain had a permanent crusade upon her own soil. The rest of Europe had a long way to go in quest of it; whether to the North, against the barbarians, to the South, against the heretics, or to the East, against the profaners of the Holy Sepulchre. Every now and then this grand thought forced itself upon the minds of the people in the midst of local agitations and personal interests of all kinds, absorbing them in one great purpose. Nor did its influence cease to be felt until St. Louis had passed away; during the first half of the thirteenth century it was still as strong as at any time. In the first years of that century, Foulques de Neuilly, a rival by his eloquence, and by the enthusiasm which he inspired, of Peter the Hermit and St. Bernard, going about from one tournament to another, persuaded all the French chivalry to take the cross. An army of barons embarked at Venice and went to overthrow the Byzantine Empire, as a preparatory step to the taking of Jerusalem. In spite of the disapprobation which a severe sense of justice led Innocent III to pronounce against this remarkable conquest, we cannot deny its grandeur, nor the Christian sentiment which inspired it. We see the French knights always demanding as a first condition of their negotiations the reunion of the Greek Church with Rome, and making it the first result of their victory. This conquest, moreover, was but a just chastisement inflicted upon the perfidy of the Greek emperors, who had always betrayed the cause of the Crusaders, and upon a degenerate and sanguinary people, who were always their slaves or their assassins.

Although the idea of the crusade must have lost some of its force by being diverted in other directions, yet that

force is revealed to us in the conduct of those princes who felt their life to be incomplete till they had seen the Holy Land. Such were Thibaut of Champagne, in whom this expedition inspired such beautiful verses; the saintly and pious Louis, husband of our Elizabeth, whom we shall see dying on the way; Leopold of Austria, and even the king of distant Norway, who wished to be the companion of St. Louis. The wives of these gallant men did not hesitate to accompany them on these dangerous pilgrimages; there were to be found almost as many princesses as princes in the camps of the Crusaders. Even children caught the general enthusiasm, and all over Europe was witnessed that touching sight, the crusade of the children, in 1212, the issue of which was so sad — for they all perished — but which was a supreme proof of that love of sacrifice, and that perfect devotion to faith and convictions, which animated the hearts of men, in those days, from the cradle to the grave. That which these little children had attempted at a premature age, old men wasted with years did not hesitate to undertake; as illustrated in the case of John of Brienne, King of Jerusalem, who after a life wholly consecrated to fighting for the Faith and for the Church, even against his own son-in-law, Frederick II, went, when he was more than eighty years of age, to assume the defence of the new Latin Empire of the East. After a series of triumphs which were almost miraculous, he expired at the age of eighty-nine, exhausted rather by victory than by old age, having divested himself of the imperial purple and his glorious armor, to put on the habit of St. Francis, and thus to die clothed in these insignia of a final triumph (1237).

With these individual manifestations of zeal, Europe saw at the same time the three great military orders flourishing as a permanent army of the Cross, — the armed fraternities of The Temple, of St. John of Jerusalem, and of

St. Mary of the Germans. The last named had as grand-master, during the first years of the thirteenth century, Hermann of Saltza, illustrious for his noble and indefatigable efforts to conciliate the Church and the Empire, and under whose reign the first expedition of the Teutonic Knights into Prussia took place. One of the principal centres of the order, afterwards its capital, was near the tomb of St. Elizabeth of Marburg.

In the picture before us, then, we have, in the East, the conquest of Constantinople and the overthrow of the Greek Empire by a handful of French soldiers; in Spain, las Navas de Tolosa and St. Ferdinand; in France, Bovines and St. Louis; in Germany, the glory and the ruin of the Hohenstaufens; in England, the Magna Charta; and at the head of the Christian world, the great Innocent III and his heroic successors. Are not all these sufficient to characterize the epoch of St. Elizabeth as a memorable one in the history of mankind?

And if we seek the fundamental ideas of that age, it will be easy for us to find them, on the one hand, in the magnificent unity of that Church which nothing escaped; which proclaimed, in its august mysteries, as well as in its slightest details, the definitive supremacy of mind over matter; which consecrated, with prudent and paternal solicitude, justice and equality among men; and which, in securing to the poorest serf liberty of marriage and the sanctity of the family, in assigning to him a place in her temples by the side of his master, and especially in opening to him access to all her spiritual dignities, elevated his condition vastly above that of the most favored slave of antiquity. On the other hand, we see the secular power, the Empire, or royalty, often profaned by the passions of those who were its depositaries, yet restrained by a thousand bonds in the way of charity, finding everywhere in its digressions the barriers raised by Faith and the Church;

uneducated as yet to view with favor those general legislatures which too often crush the genius of nations under the level of a sterile uniformity; but charged with the duty of protecting all individual rights and maintaining the sacred customs of their ancestors, with the proper development of local needs and of personal pursuits; finally presiding over that grand feudal organization which was founded wholly upon the sentiment of duty as involving reciprocal rights, and which gave to obedience all the dignity of a virtue with all the devotion of attachment. The atrocities committed by John Lackland during his long struggle with the Church, and the miserable decrepitude of the Byzantine Empire, sufficiently illustrate what would have been the secular power, in that age, if left to itself; whereas its alliance with the Church gave to the world crowned saints, such as St. Louis and St. Ferdinand; that is, kings such as have never since been known.

Thus far I have spoken principally of the political and social life of the century. The spiritual, or interior life, the life of faith, in so far as we can distinguish it from that of a previous age, presents a spectacle yet more grand and marvellous, and one which is connected much more intimately with the life of the saint whose history I have written. Side by side with these great events which changed the face of empires, we see revolutions yet more complete and lasting in the spiritual kingdom. Side by side with these illustrious warriors, these saints seated on the throne, we see the Church producing, and sending forth in search of souls, invincible conquerors and armies of saints, recruited from every rank of Christian society.

In fact a great corruption of morals, the outgrowth of the many and conflicting heresies, had gradually crept into society and threatened it on all sides; fervor and piety were relaxed. The great religious foundations of the pre-

ceding centuries — Cluny, Citeaux, Prémontré, and Chartreux — no longer sufficed to vivify it, while in the schools an arid logic too often dried up its very sources. Disordered Christianity required a new and sovereign remedy; her enervated members needed a violent shock; at her head, at the Church of Rome, new and stronger arms were demanded. God, who has never forsaken, and who has sworn never to forsake, His spouse, sent her the desired and necessary relief.

Those dreams were indeed prophetic visions in which Innocent III and Honorious III saw the Lateran Basilica, the mother and cathedral of all Christian churches,[1] about to fall to the ground, but supported by an Italian beggar in one instance, and in the other by a poor priest of Spain. Behold this priest, descending from the Pyrenees into the South of France, which is overrun by heretics, advancing barefooted to preach to them! It is the great St. Dominic of Guzman,[2] whose mother, while yet she bore him in her womb, saw him, under the form of a dog, carrying a flaming torch in his mouth, prophetic emblem of his vigilance and burning zeal for the Church. A shining star appeared on his forehead when he was presented at the baptismal font. He grew up in purity and piety, having no other love than that divine Virgin whose mantle seemed to him to envelop the whole celestial country; his hands exhaled a perfume which inspired all who approached him with the spirit of purity; he was gentle, amiable, humble, towards all; he possessed the gift of tears in great abundance; he sold even the books of his library to comfort the poor, and he wished to sell himself

[1] We read in the inscription, the only remnant of the ancient façade, over the modern doorway of St. John of Lateran, these words: Dogmate papali datur ac simul imperiali, quod sim cunctarum mater caput ecclesiarum, etc.

[2] He was born in 1170; commenced to preach 1200; died in 1221.

to redeem a captive soul from the heretics. But in order to save all the souls that were imperilled in the midst of so many temptations, he conceived the idea of an order of religious, who should no longer be recluse, — confined to one locality, — but who should wander over the whole world, seeking to overcome wickedness wherever they might find it; who should be *the Preachers* of the Faith. He went to Rome to obtain the approval of his salutary project, and on his first night there he had a vision, in which he saw Christ preparing to strike the guilty world; but Mary, intervening, presented to her Son, to appease Him, Dominic himself, and another, whom he had never seen. The next day he entered a church and there saw a man clothed in rags, whom he recognized as the companion that the Mother of the Redeemer had given him. He threw himself at once into his arms, exclaiming, "You are my brother; we are contending in the same arena; let us fight together, and nothing shall prevail against us." And from that moment they were united in heart and soul. The beggar was St. Francis of Assisi, the glorious mendicant of Christ.[1] He, too, had conceived the project of conquering the world by humility and love, in becoming the *Minor*, the least of all men. He undertook to restore a spouse to that divine poverty which had remained a widow since the death of Christ.[2] At the age of twenty-five he sundered all the ties of family, of honor, and dignity, and came down naked from the mountain of Assisi to give to the world the most perfect example of "the folly of the Cross" that had been

[1] Il glorioso poverello di Christo. He was born in 1182, and died in 1226.

[2] Questa, privata del primo marito,
Mille e cent'anni e più dispetta e scura
Fino a costui si stetti sensa invito. . . .
Dante, *Paradiso*, XI.

given since that Cross was planted on Calvary. But by that folly, far from revolting the world, he subjugated it. The more this sublime madman purposely demeaned himself, that by his humility and his contempt for human respect he might render himself worthy to be a vessel of love, the more his greatness shone forth, attracting admiration far and near, and the more men threw themselves at his feet; some ambitious to strip themselves of everything, as he had done, others anxious at least to listen to his inspired words. It was in vain that he sought martyrdom in Egypt; the East sent him back to the West, which it was his mission to enrich, not by his blood, but by that ocean of love which overflowed his heart, and by those five wounds which it was his glorious privilege to receive from Him who had loved the world even unto death. And he, too, embraced the whole world in his love. First he loved all mankind with a tenderness that knew no bounds. He stripped himself of his only garment to cover a poor man. "For," he said, "if I should not give what I have to him who is more needy than me, I should be accused of theft by the great Giver of all things, Who is in heaven." Thus, too, all nature, animate and inanimate, every living creature, was to him a brother or a sister, to whom he preached the word of a common Father, whom he longed to deliver from the oppression of men, and whose sufferings he was ever ready to relieve. "Why," said he to a butcher, "do you hang and torture thus my brothers, the lambs?" And to the captive birds, "Turtle doves, my dear little sisters, simple, innocent, and chaste, why did you permit yourselves to be caught?"[1] He knew, said his biographer, also a saint, that all creatures had the same origin as his own, and by his tenderness towards them, as well as by their miraculous obedience to him, he

[1] Sororcullae meae turtures, simplices, innocentes et castae, ut quid ita vos cepi permisisti? — S. Bonaventure, *Vita S. Fran.*, p. 176, ap. Bollandist.

showed what a man, who is victorious over sin, and has re-established in himself the natural relations with his God, can be for that nature which is fallen only because of him, and which awaits its restoration only through him. Jesus and Mary themselves opened to him all the treasures of the Church, in the wretched little chapel of the Portiuncula, which still remains as a precious relic of that poverty of which he was, according to Bossuet, a desperate lover.[1] The Pope confirmed these celestial favors at the sight of the red and white roses which Francis presented him in midwinter. Then he climbed the rocks of Monte Alverno, to receive there the glorious stigmata[2] which were to complete his conformity with the Saviour and make him, in the eyes of Christian people, the real cross-bearer, the gonfalonier, of Christ. Three centuries later the Holy See named him the Angel of the East, marked with the sign of the living God. At the sight of these two men the age realized that it was saved, that new blood was to be instilled into its veins.

Innumerable disciples ranged themselves under these captivating banners; a general cry of enthusiasm and sympathy went up, which has been prolonged through the centuries and which resounds everywhere, in the constitutions of the Sovereign Pontiffs, as well as in the songs of the poets.[3] "When the Emperor Who reigns eter-

[1] Happy, a thousand, thousand times happy, poor St. Francis, the most ardent, the most enraptured, and, if I may dare use the expression, the most desperate lover of poverty that the Church perhaps has ever known. — Bossuet, *Panegyric of St. Francis.*

[2] Corpore suo Christi triumphalia stigmata praeferenti. — Bull of Alexander IV, *Benigna.*

[3] Cieco era il mondo; tu failo visare:
Lebroso; hailo mondato:
Morto; l'hai suscitato:
Sceso al inferno; failo al ciel montare.
Guittone d'Arezzo, *Canz. à San Francesco.*

nally," said Dante, "wished to save His wavering army, He sent these two champions to the assistance of His Spouse, and they by their acts and words brought back the wandering people."[1] "These two orders," said Sixtus IV, after they had been in existence two centuries and a half, "like the two first rivers of the Garden of Eden, have bedewed the soil of the universal Church by their teaching, their virtues, and their merits, and have each day rendered it more fruitful. These are the two seraphim who, raised upon the wings of a sublime contemplation and an angelic love above all earthly things, by their unceasing chant of the divine praises, and by their manifestation of the immense benefits which God, the Supreme Maker, has bestowed upon the human race, are continually gathering into the granaries of Holy Church abundant sheaves from the pure harvest of souls redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. These are the two trumpets of which the Lord makes use to summon His people to the banquet of His holy Gospel."

Scarcely had these orders, which were to merit such magnificent eulogies, sprung into existence, when their wonderful growth and influence became one of the most important historical facts of that epoch. The Church suddenly found herself mistress of two numerous armies, ready to move in any direction, and always at her command, which at once set about invading the world. In 1277, half a century after the death of St. Dominic, his order numbered four hundred and seventeen convents, scattered all over Europe. St. Francis, during his life-

[1] Quand lo imperador che sempre regna
Provide alla milizia ch'era in forse. . . .
. . . a sua sposa succorse
Con duo campioni, al cui fare, al cui dire
Lo popol disviato si raccorse.

Paradiso, XII.

time, assembled one day five thousand of his monks at Assisi; and thirty-five years later, at Narbonne, it was found, in enumerating the forces of the Seraphic Order, that it already had, in thirty-three provinces, eight hundred monasteries, and at least twenty thousand religious. A century later it had a hundred and fifty thousand. Preaching among the pagan nations was resumed. The Franciscans, sent by Innocent IV and St. Louis, penetrated Morocco, pushed on to Damascus, and even into the country of the Mongolians. But they labored more especially to overcome the passions of paganism in the heart of Christian nations. They spread themselves over Italy, which was torn by so many discords, striving everywhere to reconcile parties and to root up error; acting the part of supreme arbitrators, guided in their judgments solely by the law of love. We see them, in 1233, overrunning the whole peninsula, with their crosses, their incense, and their olive branches, singing and preaching peace, reproaching cities, princes, and even the heads of the Church, with their faults and their resentments. The people yielded, at least for a time, to this sublime mediation. The nobility and the people of Placentia were reconciled by the voice of a Franciscan; Pisa and the Visconti by that of a Dominican; and on the plains of Verona we see two hundred thousand souls gathered around the blessed John of Vicenza, a friar preacher, whom the Pope had charged with the task of allaying all the discords of Tuscany, Romania, and Trevisano. On this solemn occasion he took as his text the words: *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you;* and before he had concluded, an outburst of sobs and tears convinced him that all hearts were touched, and the heads of the rival houses of Este and Romano gave, in embracing each other, the sign of their complete reconciliation. These happy results, it is true, were not of long duration; but at least the evil was

vigorously combated, the sap of Christianity was revived in their souls, an immense conflict was waged everywhere and incessantly in the name of justice against the dead letter of the law, in the name of charity against the evil inclinations of men, and in the name of grace and faith against the barrenness and poverty of scientific reasoning. This new influence made itself felt in all quarters, agitating the peasantry scattered through the provinces, manifesting itself in the government of the universities, and reaching even kings upon their thrones. Joinville informs us how, at the first place at which he landed, on his return from the Crusade, St. Louis was met by a Franciscan, who said to him, that "No kingdom was ever lost except through default of justice, and that he ought to be careful to render complete and prompt justice to his people. And the king never forgot it." We know how he sought to separate himself from his tenderly loved wife, and from his relatives and counsellors, that he might renounce the crown which he wore with so much glory, and become himself a beggar like St. Francis. But he was obliged to content himself with becoming a penitent of the Third Order; for in their conquering army they have a place for everybody. Side by side with the army of monks, numerous monasteries were open to virgins who aspired to the honor of consecrating themselves to Christ; and the vast affiliations, known under the name of the Third Order, offered a place to princes, warriors, husbands, fathers of families, in a word, to all the faithful of both sexes who wished to associate themselves, at least indirectly, in the great work of regenerating Christianity.

Tradition relates that the two glorious patriarchs of this regeneration conceived at one time the project of uniting their efforts and their respective orders, which in appearance were so alike; but the celestial inspiration by which they were guided revealed to them that there was room

for two different forces, for two kinds of warfare against the invasions of evil. They seem to have divided the work of their sublime mission, and at the same time the moral world, so as to win back to the bosom of the Church, and to reconcile with each other, love and knowledge; two great rivals, which, nevertheless, could not exist the one without the other. And this reconciliation was effected by them as it never had been done before. Whilst the love which consumed and absorbed the soul of St. Francis has merited for him at all times in the Church the name of the Seraph of Assisi, it would not perhaps be rash to attribute, with Dante, to St. Dominic the light and splendor of the Cherubim.[1] Their children have shown themselves faithful to these distinct tendencies, both of which lead to the same eternal unity; and without overlooking certain marked exceptions, we may say, that since that period in the history of the Church, the roll which has especially devolved upon the Seraphic Order has been to distil and diffuse, in unstinted measure, the treasures of love and the mystic joys of sacrifice; whilst that of the Friars Preachers, as their name itself indicates, has been to propagate the knowledge of truth and to defend and confirm it. Neither of them failed in their mission; and both, from their infancy, and during the half century of which we are speaking, begot perhaps more saints and doctors than the Church had possessed at any time, during so short a period, since the first ages of her existence. Close upon the footsteps of St. Dominic, the holy athlete of the Faith, and the coadjutor of the Eternal Husbandman,[2]

[1] L'un fu tutto serafico in ardore,
L'altro per sapienza in terra fue
Di cherubica luce uno splendore.
Dante, *Paradiso*, XI.

[2] Della fede Christiana il santo atleta,
. . . l'agricola che Christo
Elesse all' orto suo par aiutarlo.
Dante, *Paradiso*, XI.

followed the blessed Jordan, his worthy first successor as general of the order; St. Peter of Verona,[1] honored with the title of The Martyr, who, when he was assassinated by the heritics, wrote upon the ground, with the blood from his wounds, the first words of the creed whose truths he had proclaimed at the cost of his life; St. Hyacinth,[2] and Ceslas his brother, young and powerful Poles, whose meeting with St. Dominic at Rome was sufficient to induce them to renounce all earthly greatness, in order to bear the new light into their own country, whence it spread rapidly into Lithuania, Moscow, and Prussia; St. Raymond of Penafort, whom Gregory IX selected to codify the legislation of the Church, who was the author of the *Decretals* and the successor of St. Dominic; finally Theobald Visconti,[3] who afterwards, under the name of Gregory X, presided over the destinies of the Church upon earth, before acquiring the eternal right to her prayers, as blessed in heaven.

Besides these men, whose sanctity the Church has consecrated, a multitude of others brought to her the tribute of their talents and their learning: Albertus Magnus,[4] that colossus of knowledge, the propagator of Aristotelian philosophy, and the instructor of St. Thomas; Vincent of Beauvais,[5] author of the great encyclopædia of the Middle Ages; Cardinal Hugues de Saint-Cher, who made the first concordance of the Scriptures; Cardinal Henry of Suza, author of the *Summa Aurea;* and, superior to all by his sanctity, as well as by his learning, the great

[1] Born in 1252.

[2] 1183–1257, canonized in 1602.

[3] He was born in 1210, became Pope in 1271, and died in 1275.

[4] Born in 1198, died in 1280.

[5] His death occurred in 1256. He was the author of *Speculum morale, historiale, naturale, et spirituale.*

St. Thomas Aquinas,[1] the *Angelic Doctor*, a gigantic thinker in whom seems to have been concentrated all the learning of the Ages of Faith, and whose grand Synthesis has never been equalled by any subsequent work; who, though wholly absorbed in abstraction, was nevertheless an admirable poet, and merited the distinction of being chosen by St. Louis as his intimate counsellor in the most complicated affairs of his kingdom. "Thou hast written well of me," Christ said to him one day; "What recompense dost thou ask of me?" "Thyself," replied the saint. His whole life, as well as the spirit of his age, is illustrated in these words.

The army of St. Francis marched to the combat under leaders no less distinguished. While he was yet living, twelve of his first children had gone to receive the palm of martyrdom among the infidels.[2] The blessed Bernard, the blessed Egidius, the blessed Guy of Cortoon, all this company of blessed men, companions and disciples of the holy founder, survived him and preserved inviolate the deposit of that spirit of love and humility with which he had been transported. Scarcely had the Seraph of Assisi gone to take his place before the throne of God when his place in the veneration and enthusiasm of the people was filled by him whom all proclaimed his first-born, St. Anthony of Padua, celebrated, like his spiritual father, by that power over nature which won for him the surname of Thaumaturgus; whom Pope Gregory IX called *the Ark of the Two Testaments;*[3] who possessed the gift of tongues, like the Apostles; who after having edified France and Sicily, spent his last years preaching peace and union

[1] Born in 1225. Bene de me scripsisti, Thoma. Quam ergo mercidem accipies? Non aliam, Domine, nisi te ipsum. — Lesson of the Roman Breviary.

[2] Five in Morocco in 1219, canonized by Sixtus IV; seven at Ceuta in 1221; their veneration was authorized by Leo X.

[3] Arca utriusque testamenti et divinarum Scripturarum armavium.

to the cities of Lombardy, obtained from the Paduans in behalf of unfortunate debtors the privilege of assigning their property, alone dared to reproach the ferocious Ezzelino with his tyranny, causing him, according to his own admission, to tremble; and died, at the age of thirty-six, the same year that St. Elizabeth did. A little later Roger Bacon[1] revived and sanctified the study of nature, classified all the sciences, and foresaw, if he did not accomplish, the grandest discoveries of modern times. Duns Scotus disputed with St. Thomas the supremacy of the schools; and this grand genius found a rival as well as a friend in St. Bonaventure,[2] the *Seraphic Doctor*, who, when his illustrious rival, the *Angelic Doctor*, inquired from what library he drew his marvellous learning, silently displayed his crucifix; and who, when the cardinal's hat was brought to him, was engaged in washing the dishes of his convent. But it was especially by the lives of its saintly women that the order of St. Francis threw an unparalleled lustre upon this century. Liberated by Christianity, elevating herself gradually in the love and estimation of Christian people, as the devotion to the Blessed Virgin increased each day, woman could not fail to take an important part in the new development of the power by which she had been emancipated. St. Dominic, too, had introduced a fruitful reform in the rule of the spouses of Christ and opened a new career to their virtues.[3] It was not until later, however, in such women as Margaret of Hungary,[4] Agnes of Monte-Pulciano,[5] and

[1] Born in 1214. He is credited with the discovery of gunpowder, the telescope, etc. It is known that he suggested to Clement IV the plan of revising the calendar, as afterwards accomplished by Gregory XIII.

[2] Born in 1221.

[3] At Rome, in 1218.

[4] A niece of St. Elizabeth; born in 1242.

[5] Born in 1268, died in 1317.

Catherine of Sienna, that this branch of the Dominican tree produced the prodigies of sanctity that have since been so numerous. Francis, more favored, found at the beginning of his labors a sister, and an ally, worthy of him. Whilst he, the poor son of a merchant, was commencing his work with a few other humble citizens of Assisi, in the same city Clara Sciffi,[1] the daughter of a powerful count, felt herself seized with a like zeal. When she was eighteen years of age, on Palm Sunday,[2] whilst the palms which all the other faithful carried were dried and withered, that which her young hand held suddenly became green again and blossomed. She accepted this as a mandate and warning from heaven. That same night she fled from her father's house, and making her way to the Portiuncula, threw herself at the feet of St. Francis, received from his hands the cord of the coarse woollen garb, and condemned herself with him to an evangelical poverty. It was in vain that her family persecuted her; her sister and a great multitude of virgins came to join and to emulate her in her privations and austerities. In vain did the Sovereign Pontiffs beseech her to moderate her zeal, to consent to possess some means of subsistence, inasmuch as their strict cloister prevented them from going out, like the Minor Brothers, to solicit the charity of the faithful, and obliged them to depend upon the uncertainty of its being brought to them. She resisted obstinately, and at length Innocent IV granted her the *privilege of perpetual poverty*, the only instance, he said, when any one had ever asked a like favor from him. "But," he added, "He Who feeds the little birds, and Who has clothed the earth with verdure and beauty, will know how to nourish and clothe you, until that day when He will give Himself to you as an eternal nourishment, and

[1] Born in 1194, died in 1253, canonized in 1255.
[2] March 19, 1212.

when on His victorious right He will embrace you in His glory and beatitude."

Three Popes, and a great number of other holy and noble personages, came to seek light and consolation from this humble virgin. In a few years she beheld a whole army of pious women, with queens and princesses at their head, rise up and enroll themselves under the rule of Francis of Assisi, under her direction and under her name, that of the *Poor Clares*. But whilst she held this supreme authority over so many souls, her modesty was so great that she was never but once seen to raise her eyes, when she asked the Pope for his blessing; and then for the first time was it possible to know the color of her eyes. When the Saracens advanced to besiege her monastery, ill and bed-ridden though she was, she arose, and taking the ostensorium in her hands, went forth to meet them, and put them to flight. After fourteen years of a holy union with St. Francis, she lost him; and then, suffering herself from the most excruciating infirmities, she died, after having dictated a sublime testament. The Sovereign Pontiff, who had witnessed her death, proposed her to the veneration of the faithful, proclaiming her Clara amidst all clearness, light resplendent of the temple of God, princess of the poor, and duchess of the humble.[1]

What St. Francis found in St. Clara, St. Anthony of Padua found in Helen Ensimelli, a friend and a sister. But, by a marvellous effect of divine grace, it was among the daughters of kings that the order of this mendicant, who had courted all the extremities of poverty, recruited its saints, whether they entered into the strict observance of the Poor Clares, or, being obligated by the ties of marriage, were able to adopt only the rule of the Third Order. The first, in point of time, as well as by her exalted position, was Elizabeth of Hungary, whose life I have written.

[1] Alexander IV, Bull of Canonization.

It was not in vain, as we shall see, that Pope Gregory IX obliged St. Francis to send her his poor mantle. Like Eliseus of old, in receiving that of Elias, she was to find in this the strength to become the inheritor of his virtues. Inflamed by her example, her first cousin, Agnes of Bohemia, having refused the hand of the Emperor of the Romans, and that of the King of England, wrote to St. Clara [1] that she, too, had sworn to live in absolute poverty. St. Clara replied to her by an admirable letter, which is still preserved, and sent at the same time to her royal neophyte a cord to gird her loins, a pot of earth, and a crucifix. Like her, Isabella of France, a sister of St. Louis, refused to become the wife of the Emperor Conrad IV, in order to become a Poor Clare, and, like her brother, to die a saint.[2] The widow of this holy king, Margaret, the two daughters of St. Ferdinand of Castile, and Helen sister of the King of Portugal, followed this example. But as if Providence had wished to bless the tender link which united our Elizabeth to St. Francis and to St. Clara, whom she had taken as her models, it was particularly in her family that the Seraphic Order found, as it were, a nursery of saints. After her cousin Agnes there was her sister-in-law, the blessed Salome, Queen of Galicia; then her niece, St. Cunegundes, Duchess of Poland; and whilst another of her nieces, the blessed Margaret of Hungary, preferred the Order of St. Dominic, in which she died at the age of twenty-eight, the granddaughter of her sister, named after her Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, embraced, as she had, the Third Order of St. Francis, and like her merited therein an eternal reward.

Besides these holy Franciscans of royal birth, we must not forget those whom the grace of God called from the lower ranks of the people, such as Margaret of Cortona,[3] who from a courtesan became the model of penitents; and

[1] In 1236. [2] In 1269. [3] Born in 1244.

such especially as St. Rose of Viterba,[1] an illustrious and poetic heroine of the Faith, who, though but ten years of age, when the fugitive Pope no longer had any territory left him in Italy, entered the public place of her native city to preach the rights of the Holy See against the imperial authority, and so far succeeded in disturbing the latter that she merited being exiled at the age of fifteen, by order of Frederick II. She returned in triumph with the Church, and died at the age of seventeen, the object of the admiration of Italy, where her name is still to-day so popular.

These two great orders, which peopled heaven by arousing the world, in spite of the diversity of their characters and their means of action, were alike in one distinguishing feature; that was their love and devotion to Mary. It was impossible that the influence of that sublime faith in the Virgin Mother, which had exercised an ever-increasing empire over the hearts of men since the proclamation of her Divine Maternity by the Council of Ephesus, should not be felt in the great revival of Christian souls in the thirteenth century. Although St. Bernard had, during the preceding century, awakened in the devotion of the people to the Blessed Virgin that same fervor which he imparted to all the noble instincts of Christianity, still we may say it was the two mendicant orders that brought the devotion to its highest degree of splendor and power, from which it was never to recede. St. Dominic, by the institution of the Rosary, and the Franciscans, by preaching the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, erected to her two majestic columns as it were, the one of practice, the other of doctrine, from the summit of which the sweet majesty of the Queen of Angels presided over Catholic piety and learning. St. Bonaventure, the great and learned theologian, became a poet to sing her praises, and twice

[1] Born in 1235, died in 1252.

paraphrased the entire Psalter in her honor.[1] All the works and all the institutions of this period, especially all the inspirations of art, such as they have been preserved to us in its grand cathedrals, and in the songs of its poets, show us an immense development, in the hearts of Christian people, of their tenderness and veneration for Mary.[2]

As a result of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin, there sprang up in the Church, apart from the two families of St. Dominic and St. Francis, creations as precious for the salvation of souls as they were venerable for their duration. Three new orders consecrated themselves to her at their birth, and placed themselves under the protection of her name. That of Mount Carmel,[3] which came from the Holy Land as a last offspring of that country so fruitful in prodigies, gave to the faithful children of Mary a new standard, as it were, by the introduction of the scapular.

Seven merchants of Florence founded at the same time[4] that order whose name alone expresses all the pride which, in those times of chivalrous devotion, was felt in bowing beneath the yoke, so sweet to bear, of the Queen of Heaven,—the order of Servites, or Servants of Mary, which immediately gave to the Church St. Philip Benizzi,

[1] Besides his *Speculum B. M. V.*, which was, perhaps, the most popular work of the Middle Ages, this saint wrote the *Psalterium Majus B. M. V.*, which is composed of a hundred and fifty psalms, analogous to those of David, and apply to the Blessed Virgin; then the *Psalterium Minus*, which consists of one hundred stanzas of four verses each; and finally the *Laus B. M. V.*, and a paraphrase of the *Salve*, also in verse.

[2] It was in 1220 that the Margrave Henry of Moravia, and his wife Agnes, founded the first chapel of Mariazell in Styria, which has been, even to our own times, a shrine so celebrated and popular in Germany. The *Ave Maria* did not come into general usage until about 1240.

[3] It received its first rule from the Patriarch Albert in 1209, was confirmed in 1226, and became one of the mendicants in 1247. The scapular was given by the Blessed Virgin to St. Simon Stock, who died about 1250.

[4] In 1239. It was confirmed at the Council of Lyons in 1274.

the author of the beautiful devotion of the Seven Dolors of the Virgin. Lastly, that cherished name was linked with an institution worthy of her maternal heart, the order of Our Lady of Mercy,[1] designed to redeem Christians who had fallen into slavery under the infidels. She had herself appeared, it was said, the same night, to King James of Aragon, St. Raymond of Penafort, and St. Peter Nolasco, charging them, by their love for her, to watch over the fate of their captive brethren. All three obeyed her; and Peter became the chief of the new order, which made rapid progress, and soon produced St. Raymond Nonnat, who sold himself to redeem a slave, and upon whose lips the infidels placed a padlock, so invincible did his words seem to them. This same twofold purpose, of relieving the unfortunate and propagating the Faith, had already given rise, toward the close of the preceding century, under the auspices of Innocent III, to the Trinitarians,[2] through the united efforts of two saints, a portion of whose lives, at least, belongs to the thirteenth century, St. John of Matha and St. Felix of Valois,[3] who was distinguished also by his devotion to Mary. During six hundred years, down to our own time, these two orders have continued their pacific but perilous crusade. Here, then, were five new orders, all founded during the first thirty years of that century. Nor was this all. The necessity of uniting all the moral forces in a common cause, which had its motive in that love of God and our neighbor which everything at that time tended to develop, required something more; and other *religious*, as they were from that time called, constantly sprung up in the bosom of the mother religion. The Humiliati received their definitive rule from Innocent III in 1201; the

[1] Commenced in 1223, approved in 1235.

[2] Or Mathurians, founded in 1198.

[3] The first died in 1213, the second in 1212.

Augustinians,[1] under Alexander IV, became the fourth member of that great family of Mendicants, in which the Carmelites had already taken their place by the side of the Friars Minor and the Preachers. The Celestines, founded by Peter of Moron, who afterwards became Pope, and was canonized under the same name of Celestine, were confirmed by Urban IV.[2] In a sphere more restricted and local, St. Eugene of Strigonia established the Hermits of St. Paul in Hungary;[3] and some pious professors of the University of Paris, the Congregation of the Valley of Scholars, in France.[4] And whilst these numerous and diverse careers were offered to the zeal and devotion of those souls who wished to consecrate themselves to God, and the great military orders of the East and of Spain were filling the world with the splendor of their name, those Christians whose duties or inclinations detained them in the ordinary life of the world seemed unwilling to resign themselves to having no part in this life of prayer and sacrifice, which excited unceasingly their envy and admiration. They organized themselves, as far as they could, under a similar form. Thus may be explained the appearance of the *Frati gaudenti*, or Knights of the Virgin,[5] who, without renouncing the world, devoted themselves, in honor of Mary, to the work of restoring peace and concord in Italy; the Beguines, still so numerous in Flanders, who took St. Elizabeth as their patroness; and the immense population belonging to the Third Orders of St. Dominic and St. Francis, which were open to all persons, married, and engaged in the world, who wished to approach nearer to God. It was the monastic life introduced into the family and into society.

And then, as if this rich abundance of sanctity, due to

[1] In 1256. [2] In 1263. [3] 1215.
[4] In 1218. [5] In 1233.

the new orders, was not sufficient for this glorious epoch, illustrious saints appeared among the ancient orders, in the episcopate, and in all ranks of the faithful. I have already spoken of St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, and St. Hedwiges of Poland, who became a Cistercian. With these I should mention, in the order of Citeaux, William, Archbishop of Bourges, another formidable defender of ecclesiastical liberty, and a preacher of the Crusade; St. Theobald of Montmorency (1247); the Bishop of Die, Stephen of Châtillon (1208), and the Archbishop of Bourges, Ph. Burruyer (1266), both beatified; another St. William, abbot of The Paraclete in Denmark, whither he had brought the piety and learning of the Canons of St. Genevieve of Paris, from amongst whom he had come.[1]

In the order of St. Benedict there were St. Sylvester of Osimo, and St. William of *Monte-Virgine*, authors of reforms which have preserved their names. In the order of Prémontré, the Blessed Herman Joseph (1236), so celebrated for his devotion to the Mother of God, and the signal graces which he received through her. Among the Augustinians, St. Nicholas of Tolentino,[2] who, after a saintly life of seventy years, heard every night the songs of the angels in heaven, and was so enraptured thereby that he no longer knew how to restrain his impatience to die.

Among the saintly women the Blessed Mafalda, daughter of the King of Portugal; the Blessed Mary of Oignies (1213), and the sweet St. Humility,[3] abbess of Vallombrosa, whose name alone bespeaks her whole life. Among the Virgins, St. Verdiana,[4] the austere recluse of Florence, whose invincible charity extended even to serpents; St. Zita, who lived and died an humble servant at Lucca, yet

[1] Died in 1209.
[2] Born in 1239.
[3] Born in 1210.
[4] Died in 1222.

whom that powerful republic did not disdain to take as its patroness;[1] in Germany St. Gertrude[2] and her sister, St. Mechtilda, who occupied in the thirteenth century the same place that St. Hildegard did in the twelfth, and St. Catherine of Sienna in the fourteenth, among those saintly virgins to whom our Lord revealed the most intimate knowledge of Himself.

Nor should we overlook, among the marvels of the age of Elizabeth, that work which all eyes have recognized to be without a rival, *The Imitation of Jesus Christ*, the glorious authorship of which has not as yet been definitely determined, but the presumed author[3] of which, John

[1] Born in 1218. *Ecco uno degl' anzian di santa Zita.* Dante, *Inf.*, XXI.

[2] Born in 1222.

[3] The controversy which for more than three hundred years has been so earnestly maintained over the question of the authorship of *The Imitation* is one of the most remarkable and curious facts of literary history. The great work first appeared in the early part of the fifteenth century, anonymously, as was frequently the case in those days, especially with books of this character. At an early period of its history it was attributed to St. Bernard, and then to St. Bonaventure. Subsequent examination proved conclusively that *The Imitation* could not have been the work of either the Abbot of Clairvaux or the Seraphic Doctor. Of the many to whom the authorship has since been ascribed, the controversy has been waged chiefly over the claims of three candidates for the honor, John Gersen, Benedictine Abbot of Vercelli, John Charlier Gersen, Chancellor of the University of Paris, and Thomas à Kempis.

Whether such a person as Gersen, Benedictine Abbot of Vercelli, ever lived, is at least very uncertain. His name appears for the first time in connection with this subject, in the early part of the seventeenth century, nearly four hundred years after his supposed existence; and although his claims have been strongly urged by the Benedictines and some others, they appear to be really without any substantial foundation, and it is difficult to understand how Montalembert could have spoken of him as the "presumed author."

John Gersen, Chancellor of the University, was one of the most distinguished men of his age. But his distinction was acquired in the arena

Gersen, Abbot of Vercelli, lived at this epoch, with which, moreover, the spirit of this divine work is in perfect

of public life, before the gaze of the whole world, religious and secular, not in the quiet and hidden shades of the cloister. His exalted position, as well as his great talents and accomplishments, made him a prominent and aggressive leader in the controversies, and amid the exciting scenes which were distracting the Church and civil society in his time. Without suggesting any criticism of his controversial works, or withholding the praise due to his religious writings, we may well doubt whether a treatise such as *The Imitation*, addressed chiefly to those who "dwell in monasteries, or in a congregation" (*Imit.* I, c. VII), setting forth in the simplest form and language precepts for "the life of a good religious" (*ibid.* c. XIX), could have emanated from the pen of Gersen. A list of the Chancellor's works prepared by his brother, the Prior of the Celestinians at Lyons, where he spent the last years of his life, and approved by his secretary and intimate friend, Ciresio, makes no mention of *The Imitation.* Nor is there a single contemporary witness who attributes the work to him.

Thomas (Haemerken) à Kempis was born at Kempen, in the diocese of Cologne, in 1380; entered at the age of thirteen The Congregation of Common Life at Deventer, Holland, founded by Gerard Groot and his disciple Florentius Radwyn; after seven years spent there, under the guidance of Florentius, he was admitted in 1399, at the age of twenty, to the monastery of Mount St. Agnes near Zwolle, where his brother John was prior; was invested as a member of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine in 1406, and was ordained priest in 1413, in his thirty-third year. He died there in 1471, as the *Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes* tells us, "in the ninety-second year of his age, the sixty-third of his religious clothing, and the fifty-eighth of his priesthood." He was the author of many spiritual works, the manuscript of several of which, including *The Imitation* (Burgundian Library, Brussels), are still extant in his own handwriting. John Busch, the devout Chronicler of Windesheim, and Hermann Ryd, both Canons Regular of St. Augustine, who knew Thomas personally, speak of him as the author; and at least a dozen other *contemporary witnesses* ascribe the work to him.

The anonymous contemporary biographer of à Kempis gives us a catalogue of his spiritual treatises, including therein *The Imitation.* The similarity of thought, language, and style between this and his other works afford the strongest kind of evidence of their common origin. Those who are disposed to examine this subject more thoroughly

accord. It is a most complete and sublime confession of the ardent love of Christ that characterized an age which had already witnessed the institution of the Rosary and the Scapular in honor of Mary, and which closed magnificently by the institution of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament. The first author of this feast was a poor Cistercian nun (St. Juliana of Liége); it was confirmed by the miracle of Bolsena[1] and its panegyrist was St. Thomas Aquinas.[2]

I do not fear that I shall be reproached with dwelling too much at length upon this enumeration of the saints and religious institutions of an epoch of which I am endeavoring to give some idea. Any one who has studied the character of the Middle Ages with the least attention is well aware that these were the real pivots of society in those times; that the establishment of a new order was for all minds an event of much more importance than the foundation of a new kingdom, or the promulgation of a wise code of legislation; that the saints were the real heroes of the people, and that they absorbed about all the popularity of those days. It is only after fully appreciating the real import, in the public mind, of prayer and miracles, and after having studied and comprehended the careers of St. Francis and St. Dominic, that one can

should read a very interesting and scholarly work which was published a few years ago by Sir Francis Richard Cruise, M.D., of Dublin, entitled *Thomas à Kempis* (Kegan, Paul, French & Co., London), in which the learned writer discusses fully the question of authorship, and proves, I think quite conclusively, that the author of *The Imitation* could have been no other than the humble and saintly monk of Mount St. Agnes. I am indebted to this excellent work for much of the information given here. [Translator.]

[1] 1263. The feast was instituted by Urban IV in memory of this miracle.

[2] As is known, he composed the office and the mass of the Blessed Sacrament. He is recognized, too, as the author of the prose *Lauda Sion* and the hymn *Adoro te Supplex*.

thoroughly understand the life and the actions of an Innocent III and a St. Louis.

But it was not in the political world alone that the dominion of faith and of Catholic thought exerted itself; in its majestic unity it embraced the whole human mind and associated, or employed it, in all its developments. Its power and glory are profoundly impressed upon all the productions of art and of poetry during this period; and far from impeding, it sanctified and consecrated all real progress in learning. Indeed this thirteenth century, so fruithful for the Faith, was no less productive of great results for science. I have already spoken of Roger Bacon and Vincent of Beauvais; their names suggest the study of nature, purified and ennobled by religion, and at the same time the introduction of a spirit of classification and generalization in the development of the intellectual riches of man. I have mentioned St. Thomas and his contemporaries in the mendicant orders; their names recall the most exquisite glories of theology, the queen of sciences. The Angelic Doctor and the Seraphic Doctor emulated each other in their commentaries on the famous Peter Lombard, the *Master of Sentences*, who had reigned so long in the schools. Nor should we forget Alanus of Lille, the *Universal Doctor*, who was yet living during the first years of the century; nor William Durandus, who rendered its closing years illustrious, and who compiled the most complete liturgical code in his *Rationale*. Most of these great men were distinguished for their knowledge of philosophy and law, as well as theology, and their names belong equally to the history of these three sciences. Raymond Lullus,[1] whose saintly life merited for him the title of Blessed, belongs more especially to the ranks of philosophy. The translation of the works of Aristotle, which was undertaken

[1] Born in 1234.

through the care of Frederick II, and which so rapidly became popular, opened to this last science new paths, the beginnings only of which we should assign to the age under consideration.

Legislation never perhaps had a more illustrious period. On the one hand, the Popes, supreme authorities in matters of law as well as of faith, gave to canon law the fullest development possible to this magnificent security of Christian civilization; sat themselves as judges with exemplary assiduity,[1] published immense collections, and founded numerous schools. On the other hand, that period gave birth to most of the national legislation of the various states of Europe; the great Mirrors of Swabia and Saxony, the first laws published in the German language by Frederick II at the diet of Mentz, and the code given by him to Sicily; in France, the Institutes of St. Louis, together with the *Common Law* of Pierre des Fontaines, and the *Statutes of Beauvoisis* of Philip of Beaumanoir; and lastly the French version of the *Assizes of Jerusalem*, in which is to be found the most complete résumé now extant of Christian and chivalric law. All these precious monuments of the old Christian organization of the world are preserved in the native languages of the various people, and are distinguished, less even by this fact than by their generous and pious spirit, from that pernicious Roman law, the progress of which was destined soon to change all the principles of the former. Side by side with these intellectual sciences, the study of medicine flourished in the metropolitan cities of Montpelier and Salerno, always under the influence and protection of the Church; and Pope John XXI, before ascending the pon-

[1] Innocent III sat thus three times a week; Gregory IX, Innocent IV, and Boniface were celebrated jurisconsults. I have already spoken of St. Raymond of Penafort and of Cardinal Henry of Suza, placed by Dante in his *Paradise*.

tifical throne, found leisure to write the *Treasure of the Poor*, or the *Manual of the Art of Healing*. The introduction of algebra, and of the Arabic numerals,[1] and the invention, or at least the general use, of the compass, still further marked this epoch as one of the most important for the destinies of humanity.

In the realm of art the creative genius of this century was still more manifest. That period witnessed the complete development of that sweet and majestic power of Christian art whose splendor grew dim only under the Medici, in the time of the so-called *Renaissance*, which was in reality but a renaissance of pagan idolatry in letters and arts.[2] It was the thirteenth century that inaugurated, with Cimabue and the cathedral of Cologne, that long series of splendors which terminated only with Raphael and the cathedral of Milan.

Architecture, the first of the arts, because of its duration, its popularity, and its religious sanction, was naturally the first also to yield to the new influences which had developed among Christian nations; the first in which their grand and holy thoughts found an expression. It seemed as though that immense movement of souls which was represented by St. Dominic, St. Francis, and St. Louis could have no other adequate expression than those gigantic cathedrals which appeared to lift themselves heavenward, as if to bear on the summit of their spires and pinnacles the universal homage of love and victorious faith of Christians. The vast basilicas of preceding

[1] They were introduced in Italy under Frederick II, by Leonardo Bonacci, and in France under St. Louis.

[2] This recalls the exclamation of Pope Adrian VI, on entering Rome after the death of Leo X, at the sight of all the ancient statues which had been exhumed. *Proh! idola barborum!* It was prompted quite as much by a sentiment of Christian art as by the pious emotions of the head of the correct Catholic Church.

centuries appeared to them too bare, too heavy, too empty for the newly awakened emotions of their piety, and for the renewed vigor of their faith. It was necessary that this intense fervor of faith should have the means of fitly symbolizing itself in stone, and thus of bequeathing itself to posterity.

The Sovereign Pontiffs and the architects saw the need of some new combination, which should meet and adapt itself to all the newly developed riches of the Catholic spirit. They found it in following those columns which rose opposite each other in the Christian basilica, like prayers which, in meeting before God, incline and embrace one another, as sisters; in that embrace they found the ogee. By its introduction, which was not general until the thirteenth century, everything was modified, not in the inward and mystical character of religious edifices, but in their exterior form. Instead of being stretched out upon the earth, like so many vast roofs, to shelter the faithful, everything towered upwards, pointing towards the Most High. The horizontal line disappeared little by little, so universal was the idea of elevation, the tendency towards heaven. From this time forth crypts and subterranean churches disappeared; the Christian thought, which no longer had anything to fear, revealed itself in the full light of day. In the words of the *Titurel*, the grandest poem of that period, in which the ideals of Christian architecture are outlined, "God no longer wished His beloved people to assemble in a timid and ignoble manner, in holes and caverns." These devoted people, who had been so willing to shed their blood generously for God in the Crusades, now sought to consecrate to the service of this same God all the work of their hands, and all the faculties of their minds and hearts, by erecting to Him dwellings worthy of His name. Countless beauties sprang up on every side, in this blossoming of the earth enriched by

Catholicism, which seemed to be reproduced in every church in the marvellous multiplication of capitals, turrets, and windows.

I should be led away, a thousand times too far, were I to attempt to enter into details of all the grandeur and poetic beauty which this transformation of architecture in the thirteenth century has wrought in the world. I need merely note here the fact that the first, as well as the most complete, production of Gothic architecture, at least in Germany, was the church built over the tomb of St. Elizabeth[1] by the offerings of the multitude of pilgrims who flocked thither. I must recall, also, at least the names of some of the immortal cathedrals which were built at the same time in all parts of Christian Europe, and which, if they were not completed then, at least had their plans traced by the hands of men of genius, who cared not even to leave us their names. They loved God and their neighbor too well to love glory.

In Germany, after Marburg came Cologne (1246),[2] the model church, in which the confidence of faithful generations was betrayed by their posterity, but which, standing still erect in all its glory, is, as it were, a defiance thrown at modern impotence; Cologne which, with Strasburg and Freiburg, forms the magnificent Gothic trilogy by the Rhine. In France, Chartres, dedicated in 1260, after a century and a half of persevering labor; Reims (1232), the cathedral of the monarchy; Auxerre (1215); Amiens (1228); Beauvais (1250); the *Sainte-Chapelle* and St. Denis; the façade of *Notre-Dame* (1223). In Belgium, St. Gudule of Brussels (1226), the church of the Dunes, built by four hundred monks in fifty years (1214–1262). In England, Salisbury,

[1] M. Moller, a celebrated German architect of our own time, has published a special work in folio upon this church. (See Chapter XXXI of this *Life*.)

[2] The dates in parentheses indicate the commencement of the works.

the most beautiful of all (1220); half of York (1227–1260); the choir of Ely (1235); the nave of Durham (1212), and the national Abbey of Westminster (1247). In Spain, Burgos and Toledo, founded by St. Ferdinand (1228). Nearly all of these colossal works were undertaken, and brought to completion, by a single city, or a single chapter, whilst the most powerful kingdoms of the present day, with all their financial resources, would be unequal to produce a single one like them. Wonderful and consoling victory of faith and humility over incredulous pride, a victory which astonished even the simple souls of that day, and which drew from a monk this exclamation of naïve surprise: "How is it possible that hearts so humble should be possessed of genius so exalted?"[1]

Christian sculpture could but follow the progress of architecture, and from that period it commenced to bear its choicest fruits. Those beautiful groups of saints and angels, which adorn the façades of cathedrals, were then chiselled in stone. We see the custom introduced in tombs of having the statues of husband and wife lying side by side, sleeping the sleep of the just, their hands sometimes united in death, as they had been in life; or again, the mother reclining in the midst of her children: those statues so full of gravity, piety, and beauty, images of all the peaceful tranquillity of a Christian death; the head often supported by little angels, who seem to have received their last breath; the limbs crossed when they had been Crusaders. The relics of the saints which were brought back in such large numbers from the Byzantine conquest, or which were unceasingly furnished by the glory of the contemporary elect, were a constant subject for the work of Catholic sculpture. The richly embellished

[1] Et mirum in tam humili corde potuisse inesse tam magnum animum. —*Vita Hugonis abb.*, ap. Digby, *Mores Catholici.*

shrine of St. Elizabeth is a monument of what art could produce, even in its infancy, when inspired by fervent piety. That of St. Genevieve merited for its author, Ralph the Goldsmith, the first letters of nobility that were issued in France; and thus art, rather than wealth, in Christian society, triumphed over the inequalities of birth.

Painting, although as yet in its infancy, gave promise of a glorious future. Stained glass windows, which were then coming into general use, opened up a new field for this art by throwing upon all the ceremonies of divine worship a new and mysterious light. The illuminated *Missal* of St. Louis, and the *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin*, by Gauthier de Coinsy, which are to be seen in the Royal Library, show what Christian inspiration could already produce. In Germany it was the dawn of that pure and mystical school of the Lower Rhine, which was destined, more than any other, to unite the charm and innocence of expression with brilliancy of coloring. The popularity of this nascent art was already so great that ideal beauty was no longer sought in fallen nature, but rather in those mysterious and profound types, the secret of which the humble artists had drawn from the depths of their own religious contemplations.[1]

I have not yet mentioned Italy, for the reason that she merits a special place, apart from the rest, in this too brief enumeration. In fact this country, always the land of beauty, had taken the lead, and already surpassed the rest of the world, in the cultivation of Christian art. Pisa and Sienna, still beautiful at the present day, in their melancholy and neglected condition, served as the cradle of this

[1] Wolfram von Eschenbach, one of the most celebrated poets of Germany at his epoch (1220), to give an idea of the beauty of one of his heroes, said that the painters of Cologne and Maestrecht could not have made him more beautiful. Passavant, *Kunstrein*, p. 403.

art, and prepared the way for Florence, which afterwards became its capital. Although enriched for a century with admirable edifices, Pisa produced the exquisite gem of Santa Maria della Spina (1230) and planned the Campo Santo,[1] a unique monument of the faith, the glory, and the genius of a Christian city. Sienna designed the erection of a new cathedral, which, had it been accomplished, would have surpassed all others. In these two cities Nicola Pisano[2] and his illustrious family founded that style of sculpture, so animated and pure, which seemed to impart life to marble, and which produced the pulpit of Santa Croce at Florence. Giunta of Pisa and Guido of Sienna inaugurated at the same time, in painting, that grave and inspired school which soon grew under Cimabue and Giotto, and touched heaven, as it were, with the monk of Fiesole. Florence received a work of Cimabue as a triumph, and believed that an angel had come from heaven to paint that truly angelic head of Mary in the Annunciation, which is still venerated there.[3] Orvieto beheld a cathedral, growing up in her midst, worthy to rank among those of the North (1206–1214), and Naples had, under Frederick II, her first painter and first sculptor.[4]

Lastly, Assisi erected, in her triple and pyramidal church, over the tomb of St. Francis, a sanctuary of art, and at the same time of irresistible zeal for the Faith. More than one Franciscan had already distinguished himself in the art of painting; but from that time the influence of St. Francis upon artists living in the world

[1] The plan was conceived in 1200 by Archbishop Ubaldo, and was not executed till 1278.

[2] He flourished from 1207 to 1230. His masterpieces are the pulpit of the baptistry of Pisa, that of the cathedral of Sienna, and the tomb of St. Dominic at Bologna.

[3] At the church of the Servites. It was painted, according to the legend, in 1252.

[4] Tomaso di Stefani and Nicolas Masuccio.

was extraordinary. They seemed to have found the secret of all their inspiration in the prodigious development which he had given to the element of love; henceforth they placed the lives of St. Francis and St. Clara by the side of those of Christ and His Mother in the choice of their subjects; and we find all the celebrated painters of this and the succeeding centuries paying their tribute to him by adding their paintings to the beauties of the basilica of Assisi. It was near there also that, a little later, the mystic school of Umbria sprang up, which attained, in Il Perugino and Raphael, the highest degree of perfection in Christian art. One would have said that, with sweet and wonderful justice, God had wished to bestow the crown of art, the most beautiful embellishment of the world, upon that portion of the earth in which the most fervent prayers and the most noble sacrifices were offered to Him.[1]

If art was already so rich at the time of which I am speaking, and corresponded so well with the movement of souls, what shall I say of its sister, poetry? It certainly never has enjoyed so popular and so universal a sway as it did then. Europe seemed one vast school of poetry, from which issued each day some work, some new production. Besides possessing abundant sources of inspiration, people began then to make use of an instrument which was calculated to afford an immense power in the development of their imagination. This first half of the thirteenth century, which was, as we have seen, so productive, was also the period of growth and expansion for all

[1] All that I have suggested here in regard to painting and art in general, and especially in regard to the influence exerted by St. Francis, is described and beautifully developed in M. Rio's book entitled *Christian Painting in Italy*. This work has already effected a salutary revolution in the study and appreciation of art in France as well as in Italy.

the living languages of Europe, the time in which they all commenced to produce monuments that have endured to the present day. Translations of the Bible,[1] and collections of statute laws,[2] made for the first time in the modern languages, prove their increasing importance. Thus each nation found itself possessed of an entirely new sphere of mental activity, in which its genius might exercise itself without restraint.

Prose was adapted to history, and very soon chronicles appeared written for the people, not unfrequently by them, which took their place by the side of the Latin Chronicles, so long neglected, yet which contained so much eloquence, and so many beauties wholly unknown to the classic Latin. Poetry, however, retained for a long time the supremacy to which it was entitled by right of primogeniture. From that period, in nearly all the countries of Europe, we find it assuming those forms which for a long time have been regarded as belonging exclusively to a pagan or a modern civilization. The epic, the lyric, elegy, satire, even the drama, were as familiar to the poets of that era as to those of the age of Augustus or of Louis XIV. And when we read their works with that sympathy which is born of a religious faith identical with their own, with an impartial appreciation of a society wherein mind predominated so largely over matter, and with an indifference, not difficult to conceive, to the rules of modern versification, we are tempted to ask ourselves what, after all, have the writers of more recent centuries produced that is new; we wonder what thought and imagination have gained in exchange for the pure treasures which they have lost. For we must know that every subject worthy of literary thought was eulogized in the verses of these unknown geniuses,

[1] In Castilian, by order of King Alphonsus; in French, by Guyart Desmoulin.

[2] See above, p. 74, for collections of French and German laws.

and glorified by them before their contemporaries, — God and heaven, nature, love, glory, country, great men; nothing escaped them. There was no secret of the soul which they failed to discover, no mine of sentiment that they did not explore; there was no thread of the human heart which they failed to stir, nor a chord of this immortal lyre from which they did not draw the most delicious harmony.

To commence with France, her language, formed by the Troubadours of the preceding century, and perhaps by the sermons of St. Bernard, had not only become a national treasure, but, under St. Louis, acquired a European ascendency which it has never since lost. Whilst the master of Dante, Brunetto Latini, was writing his *Tesoro*, a species of encyclopædia, in French, because it was, as he thought, the most widely diffused language of the West, St. Francis was singing his canticles, wherever he went, in French.[1] French prose, which was to become the instrument of St. Bernard and of Bossuet, opened, with Villehardouin and Joinville, the series of those grand models which no nation has surpassed; but poetry, as was the case everywhere, was much more copious and more relished.

I shall say nothing of the provincial literature of the Troubadours, although modern criticism has deigned to leave its reputation unassailed, and although it flourished still in all its splendor during the thirteenth century, because I believe it possessed none of the Catholic element, that it very rarely soared higher than the praise of material beauty, and that it represented, with some few exceptions, the materialistic and immoral tendency of the Southern heresies of this epoch. On the contrary, in Northern France, by the side of the poetic fictions and certain lyric works, which approached too nearly the licentious char-

[1] It is related indeed that the name of Francis was given him, in lieu of that of his father, because of the constant use he made of the French language.

acter of the Troubadours, the national and Catholic epic appeared in all its splendor.

The two great periods which were the themes of the grandest poetry of the Catholic ages, — the Carlovingian epics, and the Round Table and the Holy Grail, inaugurated in the preceding century, — were then peopled by the characters of those romances which became so immensely popular. *The Romance of Roncevalles,* in the form in which we have it to-day, those of *Gerard de Nevers, Partenopex de Blois, Berthe aux grands pieds, Renaud de Montauban,* the *Four Sons of Aymon,* tales founded on French traditions, were all of this epoch, as were also the *Romance of the Renard,* and that of *The Rose,* which enjoyed for a longer time a certain popularity. More than two hundred poets, whose names have been preserved, flourished in this century; the day will come, perhaps, when Catholics will realize that in their works may be found some of the most charming productions of the Christian muse, instead of believing, upon the authority of a flatterer, Boileau, that poetry made its appearance in France only with Malherbe.

Among them I cannot help mentioning Theobald, King of Navarre, whose verses narrating the Crusade, and those devoted to the Blessed Virgin, are so full of pure enthusiasm, who merited the praise of Dante, and who dying bequeathed his heart to the poor Clares, founded by him at Provins; his friend, Auboin of Sézanne; Ralph of Coucy, whose name at least has remained popular, who met his death at Mansoura, under the eyes of St. Louis; the prior Gauthier de Coinsy,[1] who paid so beautiful a tribute to Mary in his *Miracles;* that woman, too, whose origin is unknown, but whose talent, and the national success she won, merited for her the glorious title of Mary of France; lastly Rutebeuf, who could find no heroine more

[1] Born in 1177, died in 1236.

worthy of his verses than our St. Elizabeth. Stephen Langton, whom I have already mentioned as primate of England and the author of the Magna Charta, intermingled his sermons with verses, and wrote the first drama known to modern language, the scene of which is placed in heaven, where Justice, Truth, Mercy, and Peace discuss the fate of Adam, and Jesus Christ alone is able to reconcile them.[1] I cast but a passing glance here upon a period in which poetry played so popular a rôle in French customs that St. Louis did not disdain to admit minstrels, or itinerant poets, to his royal table, and their ballads gave these men the entrée of all places.

In Germany the thirteenth century was the most brilliant period of this admirable poetry of the Middle Ages. This is the unanimous opinion of many scholars who have succeeded in making it again popular in that country. And it is my profound conviction that there is no more beautiful poetry, none that is impressed with so much youthfulness of heart and thought, with an enthusiasm so ardent, with a purity so sincere; in a word, in no place have the new elements which Christianity planted in the human imagination effected a more noble triumph. Would that I might render a more fitting homage to the delightful emotions which its study afforded me, when in order to become acquainted, under all its aspects, with the century of St. Elizabeth, I opened the volumes in which this marvellous beauty lies hidden! With what surprise, what admiration, I beheld all that grace, refinement, and melancholy there seem to reserve for the maturity of the world, united with the naïveté, the simplicity, and the fervent and grave piety of the first ages! Whilst the great

[1] Delarue, *Archæologia*, Vol. XIII. John Bodel of Arras is regarded as the most notable dramatic poet of this epoch. His beautiful drama, entitled *The Play of St. Nicholas*, was made known to us by M. Onésyme Leroy in his work upon the Mysteries.

epics of a purely German and Scandinavian character were being developed in the path of the *Niebelungen*,[1] that magnificent Iliad of the German races, the double cycle, of France and Brittany, of which I have before spoken, found sublime interpreters there in poets who, while they retained the gem of foreign traditions, knew well how to stamp their works with an unmistakable nationality.

Their names are still unknown in France, as Schiller and Goethe's were thirty years ago;[2] but perhaps they will not always be so. The greatest of them, Wolfram von Eschenbach,[3] gave to his country an admirable translation of the *Perceval*, and the only one extant of the *Titurel*,[4] that masterpiece of Catholic genius which, in the enumeration of her glories, we need not hesitate to place immediately after the *Divina Commedia*. At the same time Godfrey of Strasburg published the *Tristan*, which portrayed the ideas of the chivalrous ages upon love, and recounted the most beautiful legends of the Round Table; and Hartmann of Aue, the *Iwain*, together with the exquisite legend of *Poor Henry*, in which this chivalrous poet takes as his heroine the poor daughter of a peasant, and describes her as possessing all that faith and the manners of her age could inspire of devotion and self-sacrifice, the contempt of life and its goods, and the love of heaven. And how many other epics, religious and national, which it would be useless now even to name!

Nor was the lyric genius of this rich soil of Germany inferior to the epic. The pedantic and ignorant criticism of unbelieving ages has not succeeded in obliterating the

[1] This celebrated poem, in the form in which we have it to-day, dates from the first years of the thirteenth century.

[2] It must be remembered that this was written in 1836. [Translator.]

[3] He flourished from 1215 to 1220.

[4] The original French of this poem, by Guyot of Provins, is lost.

national remembrance of that brilliant and numerous phalanx of love-singers (*Minnesaenger*),[1] who, from 1180 to 1250, came from the ranks of the German chivalry, having as their leader by birth the Emperor Henry VI, but by his genius, Walter of Vogelweide, whose writings are a sort of mirror of all the emotions of his time, and a most complete résumé of this ravishing poetry. None of his contemporaries and rivals united in a higher degree with earthly affections, and an ardent and jealous patriotism, an enthusiasm for holy things, an enthusiasm for the Crusade, in which he took part, and especially for the Virgin Mother, of whose mercy and mortal sorrows he sang with an unequalled tenderness. In him it is plainly seen that it was not alone a knowledge of human love, but still more that of celestial love and all its riches, that merited for him and his compeers their title of *Love-Singers*. Mary, everywhere the queen of Christian poetry, was especially so in Germany ; and I cannot refrain from mentioning, among those who in their verses offered her the purest incense of praise, Conrad of Wurtzburg, who in his *Golden Forge*, seems to have striven to concentrate all the rays of tenderness and beauty with which she was surrounded by the veneration of the Christian world. And as if to remind us that everything in this century should draw us more closely to St. Elizabeth, we see seven of the most distinguished of these epic poets and love-singers assembling in solemn conclave at the court of Thuringia, around their special protector, the Landgrave Hermann, father-in-law of our Saint, at the moment of her birth. The verses, which were the fruit of the meeting of these brilliant pleiades, constitute, under the name of

[1] The principal collection of their works is in the Royal Library of Paris, in the manuscript called *de Manesse*. It contains the verses of one hundred and thirty-six poets. Professor Hagen, of Berlin, has just published an admirable edition, with very valuable additions.

War of Wartburg, one of the most brilliant manifestations of German genius, and one of the richest treasures of the legendary mysticism of the Middle Ages; while at the same time they are a crown of poetry for the cradle of Elizabeth.

We see crowned heads everywhere among the poets of this age; and in the Iberian peninsula, kings were the pioneers in the first progressive steps of poetry. Peter of Aragon was the earliest troubadour of Spain. Alphonsus the Wise, son of St. Ferdinand, who merited, before Francis I, the title of *Father of Letters*, and who was an historian and philosopher, was also a poet. There are few Spanish verses more ancient than his canticles to the Virgin, and the beautiful account which he gives, in the Gallic language, of the miraculous cure of his father. Denis I, King of Portugal, was the first poet of his kingdom of whom we have any knowledge. In Spain this wonderful effusion of Christian splendor, begun in the most brilliant manner, endured much longer than in any other country, and was not eclipsed until after the time of Calderon.

Whilst legendary poetry was diffusing there a gentle light, in the works of the Benedictine Gazalo de Borceo,[1] a poet truly inspired in his songs of the Virgin and the saints of his native country, the Spanish epic made its appearance in those famous *Romances*,[2] which of themselves constitute a special glory for Spain that no other nation can dispute; in which are recorded all the struggles and the beauties of her history; which have bequeathed to the people immortal memories, and which reflect all the splendor and prestige of the elegance and gallantry of

[1] 1198–1268.

[2] Those of the *Cid*, regarded as the most ancient, could not, according to the best judges, have been composed before the thirteenth century.

the Moors, without ever losing that severe Catholic character which consecrated in Spain, more than anywhere else, the dignity of man, the fealty of the vassal, and the faith of the Christian.

Italy did not witness the birth of Dante till the close of the period[1] which we have been examining, but she announced that event in a glorious manner. Poetry, less precocious than in France and Germany, made no material progress there until about this time; but its development was at once marked by a prodigious abundance.[2] In every part of this noble and fertile country, schools of poets sprang up, as a little later schools of artists made their appearance. Sicily was the cradle of the Italian muse.[3] There she appeared pure and animated, in love with nature, delicate; sympathizing intimately with the French genius, which twice afterwards made Sicily her appanage; but always profoundly Catholic.[4] At Pisa and at Sienna the poetic spirit was more grave, more solemn, like the beautiful monuments which these cities have preserved. At Florence, and in the surrounding cities, it was tender, rich, pious, and in every respect worthy of the country.[5] It was a veritable legion of poets, having as their leaders the Emperor Frederick II, the kings Enzio and Manfred his sons, and his chancellor Pietro delle Vigne; then Guittone d'Arezzo, a most fertile and at times a

[1] He was born in 1265.

[2] The reader should see the collection entitled *Poeti del primo secolo*, that is, of the thirteenth, where he will find masterpieces enough to disconcert those who fancy that Italian poetry commenced only with Dante.

[3] Such at least was the opinion of Dante.

[4] See the beautiful verses to the Host, of Guglielmotto d' Otrante, in 1256.

[5] I ought especially to cite the charming poems of Notajo d' Oltrarno (1240). They are to be found in Crescimbeni and the *Rime Antiche*.

[6] The first Italian sonnet is attributed to him.

most eloquent and pathetic poet, who was fervently praised by Petrarch and imitated by him; and finally Guido Guinicelli, whom Dante did not hesitate to declare his master.[1] But all were preceded and surpassed by St. Francis of Assisi.[2] His influence was destined to vivify art, and his example could not fail to inflame the poets. Whilst he was engaged in his mission of reforming the world, God permitted him to be the first to make use of that poetry which was to produce a Dante and a Petrarch. As his verses were but the inspiration of his soul, and he followed no rule, he had them corrected by Brother Pacific, who had become his disciple, after having been the poet laureate of Frederick II. And then both of them would walk along the roads, singing these new hymns to the people, telling them that they were the musicians of God, who wished no other compensation than the repentance of sinners. These beautiful verses are still preserved, in which the poor mendicant celebrated the mysteries of love from on high in the language of the people, and with a passion which he himself feared would be accused of folly.

Nullo donca oramai piu mi reprenda,
Se tal amore mi fa pazzo gire.
Già non e core che più si difenda,
D'amor si preso, che possa fuggire.
Pensi ciascun come cor non si fenda,
Fornace tal come possa patire . . .
Data m'è la sentenzia,
Che d'amore io sia morto.
Già non voglio conforto,
Se non morir d'amore . . .

[1] *Purgat.*, Cant. VI.

[2] I would call attention here to the beautiful work of M. Goerres, entitled *St. Francis of Assisi the Troubadour*, translated in the *Revue Européenne* of 1833. There are no Italian poems of which we can fix the date with certainty, before those of St. Francis. I have referred above to the beautiful poems of St. Bonaventure.

Amore, amore grida tutto 'l mondo;
Amore, amore ogni cosa clama . . .
Amore, amore tanto penarmi fai,
Amore, amore nol' posso patire:
Amore, amore tanto mi ti dai,
Amore, amore, ben credo morire:
Amore, amore tanto preso m'hai,
Amore, amore, famm' in te transire:
Amore dolce languire,
Amor mio desioso,
Amor mio dilettoso,
Annegami in amore.

No, never did that love, which was, as we have seen, his whole life, utter a cry so enthusiastic, so truly celestial, so wholly detached from earth; so much so was it, that not only have succeeding centuries never been able to equal it, they have not even been able to comprehend it. The celebrated canticle to his brother the sun is well known; composed after an ecstasy in which he was assured of his salvation. Scarcely had it escaped from his heart, when he went forth to sing it on the public place of Assisi, where the bishop and the chief magistrate were on the point of coming to blows. At the accents of this divine lyre, hatred was extinguished in all hearts, enemies embraced each other with tears, and harmony was restored, brought about by the influences of poetry and sanctity.

Finally, the highest and most beautiful poetry, the liturgy, produced in this century some of the most popular masterpieces. If St. Thomas Aquinas gave to that age the *Lauda Sion*, and the admirable office of the Blessed Sacrament, it was a disciple of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano, who bequeathed to us the *Dies Irae*, that cry of supreme terror; and another, the Blessed Jacopone, who disputes with Innocent III the glory of having composed the *Stabat Mater*, that most beautiful chant, inspired by the purest and most touching of sorrows.

Our subject has brought us back again to St. Francis, and indeed it may be said that this epoch, of which I have undertaken to sketch the more salient features, may be completely summarized in the two grand figures of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Louis of France. The one, a man of the people, who did for the people more than any other had done before him, in elevating poverty to a supreme dignity, by assuming it as a condition and a safeguard of an influence wholly new over the things of heaven and of earth; invested with that supernatural life of Christianity, which has so often conferred spiritual sovereignty upon the lowest of her children; judged by his contemporaries as the man who had walked most nearly in the footsteps of Christ; inebriated throughout his whole life with divine love; and, by the all-powerful virtue of this love, an orator, a poet, a legislator, and a conqueror. The other, a layman, a knight, a pilgrim, a Crusader, a king wearing the most exalted crown in Christendom, brave to the point of temerity, hesitating as little to expose his life as to bow his head before God; loving danger as well as humiliation and penance; an indefatigable champion of justice, of the oppressed and the feeble; a sublime personification of Christian chivalry in all its purity, and of true royalty in all its august grandeur. Both consumed with a thirst for self-sacrifice and martyrdom; both perpetually preoccupied with the salvation of their neighbor; both marked with the cross of Christ, Francis in the glorious wounds, wherein he was like unto the Crucified, and Louis in *the innermost recess of the heart, the seat of love.*

These two souls, so alike in their nature and disposition, so well adapted to understand and cherish each other, never met upon earth. But a pious and touching tradition tells us that St. Louis went on a pilgrimage to the tomb of his glorious contemporary, and that he found there a

worthy successor of St. Francis in one of the most venerable of his disciples, the blessed Ægidius. The history of their meeting portrays so well the character of the age which I am describing, that I shall be pardoned, I am sure, for producing it here. St. Louis, then, having come from Assisi to the convent of Perugia, where Ægidius dwelt, sent word that a poor pilgrim wished to speak with him. But an interior vision revealed at once to the brother that the pilgrim was no other than the saintly King of France. He hastened to meet him, and the moment they beheld each other, although it was for the first time, each threw himself on his knees, and embracing tenderly, they remained thus for a long time, resting upon one another's heart, united in this embrace of love and outpouring of affection, without exchanging a single word. Having remained thus a long time, clasped in each other's arms, on their knees, and in an unbroken silence, they arose, parted from each other, and returned, the king to his kingdom, the monk to his cell.[1] But the other brothers of the convent, when they discovered that it was the king, reproached Ægidius severely. "How," said they to him, "could you be so rude, when so saintly a king came from France expressly to see you, as not to say a single word to him?" "Ah! my dearly loved brothers," replied the blessed monk, "do not be astonished if neither of us spoke, for, from the moment we embraced, the light of

[1] Esce di cella è corre alla porta . . . insieme, con grandissima divozione ingiuocchiandosi, s'abbracciarono insieme, e bacchiarousi con tanta dimestichezza, siccome per longo tempo avessono tennta grande amistade insieme, ma per tutto questo no parlava nè l'uno nè l'altro, ma stavano cosi abbracciati, con quelli segni d'amore caritativo, in silenzio. E stati che furono per grande spazio nel detto modo senza dirzi parola insieme, si partirono l'uno d'all'altro, e santo Ludovico se n'audò al suo viaggio, e frate Egidio si torno alla cella. —*Fioretti di S. Francesco*, cap. XXXIV; celebrated chronicle of the latter part of the thirteenth century.

divine wisdom revealed to me his whole heart, and mine to him; and thus, looking into each other's hearts, we knew one another very differently from what we should had we spoken, and with far more consolation than if we had attempted to express what we felt in words; so incapable is human language of making known the secret mysteries of God!"[1] Touching and admirable symbol of that secret intelligence, that victorious harmony, which then united superior minds, saintly souls, as in an eternal and sublime compact.

We may say also that these two souls met and were completely united in the soul of a woman, in that of St. Elizabeth, whose name has already been so often under my pen. That burning love of poverty which inflamed the Seraph of Assisi, that delight in suffering and humiliation, that supreme devotion to obedience, was suddenly enkindled in the heart of a young princess, who, from a distant part of Germany, recognized in him her model and her father. That intense sympathy for the passion of a God made man, which caused St. Louis, at twenty-four years of age, to walk barefooted before the holy crown of thorns, which forced him to go twice, under the banner of the Cross, to seek in Africa captivity and death; that longing for a better life which made him strive against the wishes of his family and friends, to abdicate his crown, and hide himself under the monastic habit; that respect for poverty

[1] O frate Egidio, perche sei tu stato tanto villano . . . Carrissimi frati, non mi maravigliate de cio, imperocche nè io a lui, nè egli a me poteva dire parola, perocchè si tosto come noi ci abbracciammo insieme, la luce della divina sapienza rivelò è manifestò à me il cuore suo, et a lui il mio, e cosi per divina operazione ragguardandoci nè cuori cio ch'io volea dire a lui, ed egli a me, troppo meglio cognoscemmo, che se noi ci avessimo parlato colla bocca, e con maggiore consolazione, che se noi avessimo voluto esplicare con voce quello che noi sentivamo nel cuore, per lo difetto della lingua umana, la quale non puo chiaremente esprimere li misterj segreti di Dio. . . . *Ibid.*

which led him to kiss the hand of every one to whom he gave alms; his tears so abundant, his sweet familiarity with Joinville, and even his great conjugal tenderness: all this was to be found in the life of Elizabeth, who was not less his sister by all the emotions and all the intimate sympathies of her life, than by their common obligations under the rule of St. Francis.

It has been proved in our own day that the thirteenth century was remarkable for the increasing influence of women over the social and political world; that they held the sovereign direction of the affairs of many great states,[1] and that new homage was daily offered them in public as well as in private life. This was the inevitable result of that devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the growth of which I have previously alluded to. For the honor of all women, we must bear in mind, says a poet of that period, that the Mother of God was a woman.[2] In fact, how could kings and people have taken her constantly as their mediatrix between her Son and themselves, placed under her protection all their works, and chosen her as the object of their most fervent devotion, without bestowing some of this veneration upon the sex of which she was the representative before God, and the regenerated type? Since woman was so powerful in heaven, it was but natural that she should be so upon earth. But whilst other princesses were sharing with kings the rights of supreme government, the daughter of the King of Hungary, the descendant of a race of saints, and whose example was to produce many more, demonstrated that there was also a royalty of souls above all earthly pomps; and

[1] Blanche of Castile; Isabella of La Marche, who directed all the affairs of State of King John Lackland, her husband; Jane, Countess of Flanders, who claimed the right, as a peer of France, of assisting at the consecration of St. Louis.

[2] *Frauenlob*, a poem of the thirteenth century.

it was in exercising this, without intending or even knowing it, that she acquired her place in history. Her life, short though it was, presents a combination, perhaps unique, of the most diverse phases, of traits the most attractive, and at the same time the most austere, that can be found united in the life of a Christian, a princess, and a saint. At the same time, in the twenty years that elapsed between the day when she was borne in a silver cradle to her betrothed, and that on which she expired upon the pallet of the hospital, which she had chosen as her deathbed, there are two parts quite distinct, if not in her character, at least in her exterior life. The first was all chivalrous, all poetic, calculated to charm the imagination as well as to inspire piety. From the depths of Hungary, from that land half unknown, half oriental, the frontier of Christendom, which to the imagination of the Middle Ages presented itself under a mysterious and grand aspect,[1] she arrived at the court of Thuringia, the most brilliant and the most poetic of all Germany. During her infancy, her precocious virtue was disregarded, her piety despised; there was a disposition to send her back ignominiously to her father; but her betrothed maintained an unshaken fidelity to her, consoled her under the persecution of the wicked, and, as soon as he was master of his estates, hastened to marry her. The holy love of a sister mingled in her heart with the devoted tenderness of a wife for him whose childhood she had shared, before sharing with him the happiness of the nuptial union, and who emulated her piety and fervor. A mutual dependence, full of sweet-

[1] The famous Bertha Debonnaire, wife of Pepin, mother of Charlemagne, the principal heroine of the period of the Carlovingian epics, was also a daughter of the King of Hungary. See *li Reali di Francia*, and the romance of *Berthe aux grands pieds*, edit. of M. P. Paris. Floires, the hero of one of the most popular epics of the Middle Ages, *Floires et Blanchefleur*, was the inheritor of the throne of Hungary. See Mss. of the roy. lib., dep. Saint-Germain des Prés. No. 1989.

ness, a naïve and delicious confidence, marked this union. During the whole of their wedded life they certainly offered the most beautiful and edifying example of a Christian marriage; and it may be said, that among all the saints, no one has presented, in as high a degree as Elizabeth, the perfect model of a Christian wife. But in the midst of the happiness of that life, the joys of maternity, the homage and the brilliancy of a chivalrous court, her soul was already turning towards the eternal source of love, by mortification, humility, and the most fervent devotion; and the germs of this higher life, deposited in her, developed and blossomed into a charity without limits, and into an indefatigable solicitude for all the miseries of the poor. Meanwhile the irresistible appeal of the Crusade, the supreme duty of delivering the tomb of Jesus, led far away from her the young husband, after seven years of the most devoted union. He had not yet dared to make known to her this secret project, when, in an outburst of loving tenderness, she discovered it.

She knew not how to resign herself to this stern destiny; she followed and accompanied him a long way beyond the frontiers of her country, unable to tear herself from his arms. In the despair which wrung her soul at the moment of this touching farewell, and when she learned of the premature death of her dearly loved husband, we recognize all the energy and tenderness which filled her young heart; precious and invincible energy, worthy to be consecrated to the conquest of heaven; profound and insatiable tenderness, which God alone could heal and satisfy.

This separation once consummated, her whole life was changed, and God took the place of everything in her soul. Misfortunes threatened to overwhelm her; she who had so often nourished and comforted the poor was brutally driven from her royal residence, and wandered in

the streets with her little children, a prey to hunger and cold; she who had so often given shelter to others, now found it nowhere for herself. But when her injuries were repaired, she was none the more reconciled to life. Left a widow at the age of twenty, she scorned the hand of the most powerful princes; the world disgusted her; the bonds of mortal love once broken, she felt herself wounded with a divine love;[1] her heart, like the sacred censer, was closed to all earthly things, and open only to heaven.[2] She contracted with Christ a second and indissoluble union; she sought Him and served Him in the person of the afflicted. After having distributed to them all her treasures, all her possessions, when nothing was left her, she gave herself to them. She became poor that she might the better understand and relieve the misery of the poor; she consecrated her life to rendering them the most repulsive services. It was in vain that her father, the King of Hungary, sent an ambassador to bring her back to him. This nobleman found her engaged at her spinning wheel, resolved to prefer the kingdom of heaven to all the royal splendors of her native land. In exchange for her austerities, her voluntary poverty, the yoke of obedience under which she daily bent her whole being, her divine Spouse granted her a supernatural joy and power. In the midst of calumnies, privations, and the most cruel mortifications, she was free from even the shadow of sorrow. One look,

[1] Haec sancto amore saucia. — Hymn of the Roman Breviary for holy women.

[2] Li cuers doit estre
Semblans à l'encensier,
Tous clos envers la terre,
Et overs vers le ciel.

Le Séraphin, a Mss. poem in the Royal Library, No. 1862. This unknown poet seems to have anticipated the beautiful expression of Bossuet, when he said of the heart of Madame de la Vallière, *that it no longer beat except on the side towards heaven.*

one prayer from her, sufficed to heal the ills of her fellow-men. In the flower of her life she was ripe for eternity; and she died singing a canticle of triumph, which was heard repeated by the angels in heaven. Thus, during the twenty-four years of her life, we see her in turn an orphan persecuted in a strange land, a modest and charming betrothed, a woman unequalled for her tenderness and confidence, a loving and devoted mother, a sovereign more powerful by her beneficence than by her rank; then a widow cruelly oppressed, a penitent without sin, an austere recluse, a sister of charity, the loving and beloved spouse of Christ, Who glorified her by miracles before calling her to Himself; and in all the vicissitudes of life ever faithful to her fundamental character, to that perfect simplicity which is the sweetest fruit of faith and the most fragrant perfume of love, and which transformed her whole life into that celestial childhood to which Jesus Christ has promised the kingdom of heaven.

So much that is charming and interesting in the brief mortal existence of this young woman is not the creation of a poet, nor the fruit of a pious affection exaggerated by distance. On the contrary, it is authenticated by all the evidence of history.

The profound impression which the destiny and the heroic virtues of St. Elizabeth produced upon her own century is manifested by the tender and scrupulous care with which the faithful recalled, and repeated from generation to generation, the most trivial actions of her life, the slightest words that escaped her lips, and the thousand and one incidents that throw light upon the inmost recesses of that soul so naïve and pure. And thus we are enabled, after a lapse of six centuries, to give an account of this blessed life, with such familiar and intimate details as one expects to find only in memories of the most recent events, and with circumstances so poetic, I had almost

said romantic, that it is difficult not to see therein, in the first instance, the product of an exalted imagination, which has endeavored to embellish with every possible charm the heroine of a romance. And yet their historic authenticity cannot be doubted; for the most of these details, gathered at the same time with the evidences of her miracles, and verified by solemn inquests made immediately after her death, have been recorded by grave historians in the national and contemporaneous chronicles which furnish the ground of belief in all the other events of that time. To the minds of these pious narrators, who wrote, in accordance with the spirit of the society in which they lived, under the exclusive dominion of faith, so beautiful a Christian victory, so much charity and solicitude for the poor, and such glorious manifestations of the power of God, operated in a being so tender and so young, appeared like a delicious camp of repose in the midst of hostilities, wars, and political revolutions.

And not only has this life, so poetic, and at the same time so edifying, received the testimony of history, but it has been accorded a high sanction of quite a different character; it has been crowned with a splendor which eclipses the charms of imagination, the renown of the world, and all the popularity that historians and rhetoricians can give; it has been adorned with the most beautiful crown known to men, the crown of a *saint*. It has been glorified by the worship of the Christian world. It has been given the popularity of prayer, which alone is eternal, alone is universal, and alone is recognized at once by the wise and the rich, by the poor, the unfortunate, the ignorant, and by that immense mass of men who have neither the time nor the inclination to occupy themselves with human glories. And for those who find their chief delight in the charms of the imagination, what happiness to feel that so much poetry, so many charming traits, in which

are portrayed all the sweet and tender emotions that the human heart may experience, can be brought to mind and glorified, no longer in the pages of some romance, or upon the stage of a theatre, but under the roofs of our churches, at the foot of holy altars, in the outpouring of the Christian soul at the feet of her God.

Perhaps, carried away, as one often is, by that involuntary partiality which is felt for what has been the object of one's study and admiration during many years, I have exaggerated the beauty and the importance of my subject. I do not doubt that, apart from all my own imperfections in the work, many will feel that this century, so distant, has nothing in common with our own; that this biography so full of detail, this picture of manners so long obsolete, offers no positive and profitable results to the Christian ideas of our own days. The simple and pious souls, for whom alone I write, will judge of this. The author of this book has encountered an objection more serious than this. Captivated in the beginning by the character, poetic, legendary, romantic even, which at first view is presented by the life of St. Elizabeth, as he advanced he found himself, unconsciously as it were, engaged in the study of that wonderful development of the ascetic force which is engendered by faith, confronted by the revelation of the most profound mysteries of Christian initiation. He could not but ask himself, then, whether indeed he had the right to undertake such a work; whether the narration of the sublime triumphs of religion ought not to be left to pens by which that religion might be honored, or at least which would be exclusively devoted to it. He was, in truth, obliged to recognize that he enjoyed no such mission; and it was with fear and trembling that he undertook a work which seems to accord neither with his weakness, his age, nor his character as a layman. Nevertheless, after much hesitation, he allowed himself

to be drawn on by the necessity of giving some result to long and conscientious studies, and by the desire to present to the friends of religion, as well as to those of historical truth, the faithful and complete picture of the life of a saint of ancient days, of one of those beings who united in themselves all the beliefs and the pure affections of Christian centuries; to paint them as much as possible in the colors of their own age, and to exhibit them in all the splendor of that complete beauty with which they appeared to the minds of the people of the Middle Ages.

I am conscious that in order to reproduce such a life in all its integrity, it is necessary to confront a whole order of facts and ideas which for a long time have been reprobated by the vague religiosity of modern times, and which a sincere but timorous piety has too often avoided in religious history. I speak of those supernatural phenomena which are so abundant in the lives of the saints, which have been consecrated by faith under the name of miracles, and dishonored by worldly wisdom under the name of legends, popular superstitions, or fabulous traditions. A great many are to be found in the life of St. Elizabeth. I have endeavored to reproduce them with the same scrupulous exactness that I have followed in the narration of all the other facts of her life. The very thought of omitting, or even of palliating them, of interpreting them with an adroit moderation, would have been revolting to me. To my mind it would have been a sacrilege to conceal what we believe to be the truth, in order to humor the proud reason of our age. It would have been a culpable inaccuracy, for these miracles are narrated by the same authors, established by the same authority, as all the other events of my narrative; and I really should not have known what rule to follow in admitting their veracity in certain cases and rejecting it

in others. In fact it would have been hypocrisy, for I acknowledge frankly that I believe with the best faith in the world all the most miraculous accounts that have been given of the saints of God in general, and of St. Elizabeth in particular. Nor have I had to achieve any victory over my feeble reason in this; for nothing seems to me more reasonable, more simple for a Christian, than to bow in acknowledgment before the mercy of the Lord, when He is pleased to suspend or modify the laws of nature, of which He alone is the Creator, to assure and glorify the triumph of those other and far higher laws of the moral and religious order. Is it not easy to conceive how such souls as Elizabeth and her contemporaries, exalted by faith and humility far above the cold reasoning of the world, purified by every sacrifice and every virtue, habituated to live by anticipation in heaven, offered, as it were, an ever ready theatre to the goodness of God; or how the ardent and simple faith of the people appealed to, and, if I may dare to use the expression, justified, the frequent and familiar intervention of that almighty power, which the insensate pride of our days rejects and denies?

It is with a mingled sentiment of respect and love that I have for a long time studied these innumerable traditions of faithful generations, in which faith and Christian poetry, the highest lessons of religion, and the most delightful creations of the imagination, are blended in so intimate a union that it would be difficult to separate them. Even had I not the happiness of believing myself with entire simplicity in the wonders of divine power which they relate, I never should have had the courage to despise the innocent belief which has moved and charmed millions of my fellow men during so many centuries. Even any puerility which they may contain is exalted and sanctified in my eyes for having been the

object of the faith of our fathers, of those who were nearer to Christ than we are; and I have not the heart to disdain that which they believed with so much fervor, and loved with so much constancy. On the contrary, I do not hesitate to confess that I have many a time found help and consolation in them. Nor am I alone in this; for if everywhere those who call themselves enlightened and wise despise them, there are still asylums where these sweet beliefs have remained dear to the poor and the simple. I found them devoutly held by the inhabitants of Ireland, of the Tyrol, of Italy especially, and often even by those of more than one province of France. I gathered them from their lips, and in the tears which flowed from their eyes. They have still an altar in the most beautiful of temples, in the heart of the people. I would even dare to say that there is something wanting in the human glory of those saints who have not been accorded this touching popularity, who have not received, together with the homage of the Church, that tribute of humble love and intimate confidence which is rendered in the thatched cottage, by the fireside where late vigils are kept, from the mouth and heart of the simple and the poor. Elizabeth, gifted by heaven with such perfect simplicity, who, in the midst of the splendors of her rank, preferred to any other society that of the unfortunate and despised of the world; Elizabeth, the friend, the mother, the servant of the poor, could not be forgotten by them; and this sweet remembrance explains some of the most charming narratives that I shall have to relate.

This, however, is not the place to discuss the grave question of the faith due to the miracles recorded in the history of the saints; it is sufficient for me to have stated my own personal view of the subject. Had it been altogether different, I should not have been relieved, on that account, of the duty, in writing the life of St. Eliza-

beth, of making known all that Catholics have believed of her, and of ascribing to her the glory and the influence which her miracles have won for her in the eyes of the faithful. In any study of the Middle Ages, the implicit faith of the people, and the unanimous consent of public opinion, give to all the popular traditions inspired by religion a force which it is impossible for the historian not to appreciate. Even putting aside their theological value, it would be nothing less than blindness to ignore the part which they have played at all times in poetry and history.

As for poetry, it certainly cannot be denied that an inexhaustible mine is contained in these traditions. We recognize this fact more and more as the sources of true beauty are discerned. Even were we obliged to content ourselves with regarding legends as nothing more than *Christian mythology*, according to the contemptuous expression of the great philosophers of our day, still would they seem to me to be a source of poetry much more pure, abundant, and original than the worn-out mythology of Olympus.

Yet why need we marvel at the fact that for a long time they have been denied the right of exercising any poetical influence? The idolatrous generations which have concentrated all their enthusiasm upon the monuments and the inspirations of paganism, and the impious generations which have honored with the name of poetry the defiled muse of the last century, certainly could not give the same name to the exquisite fruit of Catholic faith; they could render it but one kind of homage, and that was to insult and laugh at it, as they have done.

From a purely historical point of view, popular traditions, and especially those which are connected with religion, if they have not a mathematical certainty, if they are not what are termed positive facts, have at least had all the

force of such, and have exercised over the passions and the manners of people a much greater influence than facts which are the most incontestable for human reason. Surely then, they must merit the attention and respect of every serious and critical historian. This should be equally the case with every man who is interested in the supremacy of spirituality in the progress of the human race, who places the cultivation of moral excellence above the exclusive dominion of material interests and inclinations; for we must not forget that at the bottom of the most puerile beliefs, the most ridiculous superstitions that have ever prevailed for any length of time among Christian populations, there has always been a formal recognition of a supernatural force, a generous protestation in favor of the dignity of man fallen, but not without the hope of salvation. They impressed upon popular convictions everywhere and always the victory of mind over matter, of the invisible over the visible, of the innocent glory of man over his misfortunes, of the primitive purity of nature over her corruption. The least little Catholic legend has won more hearts to these immortal truths than all the dissertations of philosophers. It is the sentiment of this glorious sympathy between the Creator and the creature, between heaven and earth, that constantly reveals itself to us through the course of centuries. But whilst pagan antiquity stammered it, in giving to its gods all the vices of humanity, Christian ages have proclaimed it aloud in elevating humanity and the world, regenerated by faith, to the height of heaven.

In the centuries of which I am writing, such apologies would have been ill-timed indeed. No person in Christian society then doubted the truth and the ineffable sweetness of these pious traditions. Men lived in a sort of tender and intimate familiarity with those among their ancestors whom God had manifestly called to Himself, and whose

sanctity the Church had proclaimed. This Church which had placed them upon her altars certainly could not be offended because her children came in throngs, and with indefatigable tenderness, to offer all the flowers of their thought and their imagination to these witnesses of eternal truth. They had already received the palm of victory; those who were still fighting did not cease to congratulate them, and to learn from them the science of conquering. Ineffable affections, the most salutary patronages, were thus formed between the Saints of the Church Triumphant and the humble combatants of the Church Militant. Each one chose according to his inclination, from among this glorified people, a father or friend, and under his or her protection pushed on with more confidence and security towards the eternal light. From the King and the Sovereign Pontiff, down to the poorest artisan, each one had a special patron in heaven, and in the midst of combats, in the dangers and sorrows of life, these holy friendships exercised all their consoling and fortifying influence. St. Louis dying for the Cross, beyond the seas, invoked with fervor the humble shepherdess who was the protectress of his capital. The valiant Spaniards, overpowered by the Moors, saw St. James mingling in their ranks, and returning to the charge, quickly changed their defeat into victory. The knights and noblemen had as their models and patrons St. Michael and St. George, and as the sweet objects of their pious thoughts, St. Catherine and St. Margaret. If it was their fortune to die prisoners and martyrs of the Faith, their thoughts turned to St. Agnes, the young virgin who in like manner had bowed her head under the sword of the executioner.[1] The laborer saw in the churches the picture of St. Isidore with

[1] And then, making the sign of the cross, I knelt at the feet of one of them, who held a Danish carpenter's hatchet, and said, "Thus died St. Agnes." — *Joinville.*

his plough, and St. Nothburga, the poor Tyrolese servant, with her sickle. The poor in general, those whose lives were spent in toil, met at every step the colossal St. Christopher, bending under the weight of the Child Jesus, and beheld in him the symbol of those arduous labors of life of which heaven is the harvest. Germany especially abounded in beliefs of this kind; a fact which we can still readily comprehend in studying the national spirit, which was so unaffected and pure, with an entire absence of that sarcasm, that scoffing ridicule, which destroys all poetry; as also in exploring her rich and expressive language. I should never end if I were to attempt to specify the innumerable links which thus attached heaven and earth, if I were to penetrate that vast sphere, in which all the affections and duties of this mortal life are mingled and interwoven with immortal interests; where even the most abandoned and lonely souls could find a whole world of comfort and consolation, sheltered from the disappointments of this life.

Thus the faithful soul learned to love in this life those whom he was to love in the next; he counted upon meeting beyond the grave the holy protectors of his infancy, the sweet friends of his childhood, the faithful patrons of his whole life; there was for him but one boundless love, which united the two lives of man and which, commencing here in the tempests of time, was prolonged throughout the glories of eternity. But all these beliefs and all these tender affections, by which the hearts of men were raised to heaven, were concentrated around and attached to one supreme figure. All these pious traditions, some local, others personal, were eclipsed and obscured by those which were everywhere held concerning Mary. Queen on earth, as well as Queen in heaven, whilst all heads and all hearts were bowed down before her, all minds were inspired by her glory; whilst the world was covered with

sanctuaries and cathedrals in her honor, the imagination of these poetic generations never wearied in discovering some new perfection, some new beauty in the soul of this supreme beauty! Each day brought to light some more marvellous legend, some new glory which the gratitude of the world offered to her who had reopened the gates of heaven, who had replenished the ranks of the angels, and who had taken from man the right to complain of the sin of Eve; to the humble handmaid crowned by God with the crown that St. Michael had arrested from Lucifer when he cast him into hell.[1]

"You must indeed," they said with charming simplicity, "you must indeed hear us, we are so happy in honoring you."[2] "Ah! exclaimed Walther, let us not cease praising this sweet Virgin whose Son can refuse her nothing. Our supreme consolation is in the thought that in heaven whatsoever she wishes is done!" And full of a firm confidence in the object of so much love, convinced of her maternal vigilance, Christianity committed itself to her in all its trials, in all its dangers, and reposed in that confidence, according to the beautiful picture of a poet who was a contemporary of St. Elizabeth:[3]

Endormie est la périllée,
Mais notre Dame est éveillée . . .
Oncques ne fut la glorieuse
Ne someillanz ne pareceuse . . .
Et nuit et jor la Virge monde
En esveil est por tot le monde.

[1] Expressions in the poem of the *War of Wartburg* (of the time of the birth of St. Elizabeth) and others of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

[2] Canticle in honor of Mary, in Hoffman, *History of the Chants of the Church in Germany*, p. 102.

[3] Miracles of the Virgin, by the prior Gauthier de Coinsy, Mss. of the Roy. Library, No. 20.

S'ele dormait une seule hore,
Toz li monz ce desous de sore
Trebucherait por les meffetz
Que nous fesons et avons fez.[1]

According to the spirit of these ages, in which there was so great a superabundance of faith and love, the world had been inundated, as it were, by two streams. Redeemed by the blood of Jesus, it had likewise been purified by the milk of Mary; by that milk which had been the first nourishment of God upon earth, and which had recalled heaven to Him.[2] It had constant need of both one and the other. As a pious religious who wrote the life of St. Elizabeth expressed it, "All have the right to enter the family of Jesus Christ, when they profit wisely by the blood of their Redeemer, and their Father, and by the milk of the Sacred Virgin, their Mother; yes, by that adorable blood which gave courage to the martyrs, and made their sufferings delightful to them . . . and by that virginal milk which soothes our sorrows in appeasing the wrath of God."[3] And yet, it must be said, the enthusiasm

[1] A child sleeps on, though danger is near;
But Mary is watching, there needs no fear.
No sleep, nor rest, that Mother takes
Till, danger gone, the child awakes.
Thus night and day the Virgin pure
O'er all the world keeps guard secure.
For should that blessed vigil fail,
Then naught on earth could ere prevail
To avert the woes that would ensue
For wrongs we've done, for wrongs we do.

[2] Salvatorem Saeculorum, ipsum Regem Angelorum, sola Virgo lactabat ubere de coelo pleno. — *Office of the Church for the Matins of the Feast of the Circumcision*, Lesson VIII.

[3] *Life of St. Elizabeth*, by R. F. Apollinaris. Paris, 1660, p. 41. A charming picture by one of the most accomplished painters ever inspired by Christian art, Francesco Francia of Bologna, consecrated this thought two centuries before the pious exclamation which I have

of this filial tenderness did not suffice for those souls so devoted to the Virgin Mother. They needed a yet more tender sentiment, if such were possible, more intimate, more encouraging, the sweetest and purest that man can conceive. After all, had not Mary been a simple mortal, a feeble woman, who had known all the miseries of life, who had endured calumny, exile, cold, and hunger? Ah! it was more than a mother; it was a sister that these Christian people looked for in her! And so they besought her unceasingly to remember that fraternity so glorious for the exiled race; and a great saint, one of the most devoted of her servitors, did not hesitate to invoke her thus: "O Mary! he exclaimed, we beseech thee as Abraham besought Sara in the land of Egypt. . . . O Mary! our Sara! say that thou art our sister, that for thy sake God may be favorably disposed towards us, that by thy grace our souls may live in God! Say it, then, our own most dear Sara! say that thou art our sister, and because of such a sister the Egyptians, that is, the demons, will be afraid of us: because of such a sister, the angels will come and array themselves by our side; and the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost will have mercy on us because of such a sister as thee!"[1]

It was thus they loved Mary, these Christians of other days. And when their love had embraced heaven and its Mother, and all its blessed inhabitants, it descended again upon earth, to people and love it in turn. The earth which had been assigned to them as their abode, this

cited. He represented St. Augustine standing, having at his right Mary, who is offering her breast to her Divine Child, and at his left, Jesus on the cross. In one hand he holds this inscription: *Hic ab ubere lactor;* and in the other: *Hic a vulnere pascor;* and above his head: *Positus in medio, quo me vertar nescio: Dicam ergo Jesu Maria miserere.* This picture is in the gallery of Bologna.

[1] S. Bonaventure, *Speculum Mariae,* Lect. IX.

beautiful creation of God, became also the object of their fruitful solicitude and sincere affection. Men who were then called wise, and perhaps rightly so, studied nature with the scrupulous care which Christians should give to the study of the works of God; but they could not persuade themselves to consider it as a body without a higher life. They always sought therein some mysterious relation with the duties and the beliefs of man redeemed by his God. They saw in the habits of animals, in the phenomena of plants, in the songs of the birds, and in the virtues of precious stones, so many symbols of truths consecrated by faith.[1]

Pedantic nomenclatures had not yet invaded and profaned the world reconquered to the true God by Christianity. When at night the poor man raised his eyes to heaven, he saw there, instead of the Milky Way of Juno, the path which led his brethren on their pilgrimage to Compostella; or that which the blessed followed on their way to heaven. Flowers, especially, presented a world peopled with the most charming images, a mute language which expressed the most tender and lively sentiments. The people joined with scholars in giving to these sweet objects of their daily attention the names of those whom they loved the most, the names of the Apostles and of their favorite saints, whose innocence and purity seemed reflected in the pure beauty of these flowers. Our Elizabeth had also her flower, humble and hidden, as she always wished to be.[2] But Mary especially, the flower of

[1] The study of nature, from this point of view, was very general during the thirteenth century, as may be seen in the *Speculum Naturale* of Vincent of Beauvais, and by the great number of treatises on animals, birds, and stones, which appeared both in verse and prose about this time. It is, moreover, stamped upon all the poetry of this period.

[2] The *Cystus Helianthemum* is called in German *Elizabethsblümchen*, or Little Flower of St. Elizabeth.

flowers, the rose without thorns, the lily without spot,[1] had a countless number of flowers that her sweet name rendered all the more beautiful and dear to her people. Each one of the garments that she wore on earth was represented by some flower more lovely than the others; they were like relics scattered everywhere and unceasingly renewed. The great savants of our day have thought they could improve on this by substituting for her memory that of Venus.[2] The sympathy was regarded as reciprocal; earth owed a recognition for this association with the religion of man. On Christmas night the people went forth to announce to the trees of the forest that Christ was about to come: *Aperiatur terra et germinet Salvatorem.*[3] In return the earth would bring forth roses and anemones in the place where man had poured out his blood, and lilies where he had shed tears. When a saint died, all the flowers in the vicinity would fade, or bow down their heads as his bier passed by.[4] Can we not

[1] *Lilium sine macula, rosa sine spinis, flos florium* — expressions of the ancient liturgies of the Church, repeated a thousand times by the poets of every country during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. *O vaga mia rosa,* says again St. Alphonsus Liguori in his *Canzoncine in onore di Maria Santissima.*

[2] For example, the flower which in all the languages of Europe is called *The Virgin's Slipper* has been named *Cypripedium Calceolus.* Let me cite another notable example of the gross materialism which distinguishes these brutal nomenclatures. Every one is familiar with that charming sky-blue flower "whose rounded lobes seem like a festoon of azure circling an aureole of gold," which the Germans call *Forget me not,* and which in France has received the name of *The more I see you, the more I love you,* and still more generally that of *Eyes of the Blessed Virgin.* Modern pedantry has replaced these sweet names by that of *Myosotis scorpioïde,* that is to say literally, *Scorpion-like mouse-ear.* And this is what is called the progress of science! See the excellent essay of M. Charles Nodler upon *Conventional Languages* in his *Notions de Linguistique.*

[3] A custom which still prevails in Holstein.

[4] Legend of St. Jane of Portugal.

picture to ourselves the fraternal tenderness which united St. Francis to all nature, animate and inanimate, and drew from him those cries, at once so plaintive and so beautiful? All Christians, then, had more or less of the same sentiment; for the earth, now so depopulated, so sterile for the soul, was then impregnated with an immortal beauty. The birds, the plants, everything that man met with during his earthly career, everything possessing life, had been marked by him with his faith and his hope. It was a vast kingdom of love, and of knowledge as well; for everything had its reason, and its reason in faith. Like those burning rays which, proceeding from the wounds of Christ, had impressed the stigmata upon the members of St. Francis of Assisi, so the rays proceeding from the heart of the Christian race, from the hearts of simple and faithful men, had imprinted upon all nature the remembrance of heaven, the impress of Christ, the seal of love.

Yes, there was in the world an immense volume, as it were, in which fifty generations had written, during twelve centuries, their beliefs, their emotions, their dreams, with infinite tenderness and patience. Not only was a page given to each mystery of the Faith, to each triumph of the Cross; but each flower and fruit, and every animal of the field, had likewise its place therein. As in the ancient missals, and in the great antiphonaries of the old cathedrals,[1] by the side of brilliant paintings, in which were traced with an inspiration so animated, and at the same time so profound, the principal scenes in the life of Christ and those of the saints, the text of the laws of God and of His divine words were to be seen, surrounded by all the beauties of nature; so here all animated beings were found united in singing the praises of the Lord, and

[1] For example, in the library of the cathedral of Sienna, in that of St. Lawrence of Nuremberg, etc.

from the calyx of every flower came forth an angel for the same purpose. This was the *Legend*, to be read by the poor and the simple, the gospel adapted to their use, *Biblia pauperum !* Their innocent eyes read therein a thousand beauties, whose meaning is now lost forever; heaven and earth there appeared to them filled with the sweetest knowledge; well might they sing with sincere voice, *Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua !*

Who can calculate how much life has been impoverished since then? Who thinks now of the imagination of the poor, of the heart of the ignorant?

Yes, the world was wrapped then in the Faith as with a beneficent veil, which concealed the wounds of earth, and was transparent only to heaven. To-day the reverse is true; all is stripped to view on earth, all is veiled in heaven.

To clothe the world in this consoling garment required the complete and unrestricted union of the two great principles which were so wonderfully united in the character of Elizabeth and in that of her age, simplicity and faith. To-day, as every one knows and admits, they have disappeared from society at large; the first especially has been completely extirpated, not only from public life, but likewise from the heart, from private and domestic life, from the few places where the other still remains. The atheistic science, and the irreligious philosophy of modern centuries displayed profound skill certainly in pronouncing their divorce before condemning them to death. When their holy alliance had been broken, these two celestial sisters could only embrace each other in a few unknown souls, in certain scattered and forgotten populations, and then they marched separately to death.

This death, it is needless to say, was only apparent, was indeed but an exile. They are cradled in the bosom of the imperishable Church, whence they had gone forth to

people and to beautify the world. Any one may find them there; any one also may gather up in their path the immortal relics which they have scattered, and which it has been impossible to annihilate. Their number is so great, and their beauty so attractive, that one might be tempted to believe that God had purposely permitted all the exterior charms of Catholicity to remain hidden for the moment, in order that those who should remain faithful in the midst of modern ordeals might have the inestimable happiness of discovering them and revealing them anew.

There is a whole world there to be reconquered for history and for poetry; and piety, too, will find treasures there. Let me not be reproached with having stirred up ashes that are forever extinct, with having disturbed irreparable ruins; that which might be true of human institutions would not be so in respect to the objects of the present study, at least according to the faith of Catholics. For if it is true that the Church does not die, nothing which she has once touched with her hand, and inspired with her breath, *could* die forever. It is sufficient that she should have deposited one germ of her own principle, one ray of the immutable beauty which she received with her life; once this has been, it matters not if the times have grown dark, and the snows of winter are heaped mountain high; it is always time to unearth the root, to shake off a little modern dust, to break a few artificial ligaments, and to replant it in some good soil, in order to restore to the flower the perfume and freshness of ancient days.

I should be sorry to have it thought, because of the ideas which I have here expressed, that I am a blind enthusiast of the Middle Ages; that everything therein seems admirable to me, worthy of envy, and without reproach; and that in the age in which we are destined to live the

nations are not susceptible of being healed, as in other days.[1]

Far from me be the thought of cherishing vain regrets, of permitting myself to be blinded by tears shed over the tomb of generations from whom we have received our inheritance. Far from me be the thought of bringing back times that have passed forever. I know that the Son of God died upon the Cross for the salvation of mankind, not during five or six centuries, but during all time, so long as the world shall last. I cannot think that the word of God has been withdrawn, or that His arm has been shortened. The mission of the just man remains the same; the Christian always has his own salvation to effect, and his neighbor to assist. I do not therefore regret, much as I may admire, any of the human institutions that have perished in accordance with the destiny of human things; but I do regret bitterly the spirit, the divine breath, which animated them, and which is banished from the institutions that have replaced them. It is not then an idle contemplation of the past, it is not a disdain for, nor a cowardly giving up of the present that I urge; once again, far from me be so unworthy a thought. But as the exile, banished from home for having remained faithful to eternal laws, often sends back a loving thought to those who have loved him and who await his return to his native land; or as the soldier, fighting in distant fields, is thrilled by the story of the battles which his ancestors gained there; so may it be permitted me, whom faith has rendered an exile, as it were, in the midst of modern society, to raise my heart and my eyes towards the blessed inhabitants of the celestial country, and, an humble soldier of the cause which made them glorious, to become inflamed at the recital of their conflicts and their triumphs.

[1] Sanabiles fecit nationes terrae. — *Sap.*, I, 14.

I know but too well how much there was of suffering, of crime, and of sorrow in the centuries which I have been examining, as there always has been, as there always will be, so long as the earth is peopled by a race of fallen men and sinners. But I believe that between the evils of those centuries and the evils of our own there are two incalculable differences. In the first place, the power of evil then encountered everywhere the power of good, which it seemed to augment in challenging to combat, and by which it was constantly and magnificently overcome. This glorious resistance had its principle in the force of convictions which were recognized, and in their influence upon the whole of life. To say that this force has not diminished, in the measure in which faith and religious practice have been lessened in souls, would certainly be to contradict the experience of history and the records of the world. It is far from my intention to question the brilliant progress which has been achieved in certain respects; but I would say with an eloquent writer of our own time, whose words sufficiently show that he need not be suspected of any partiality for ancient times: "Morality is certainly more enlightened at the present time; but is it any stronger? Who is not thrilled with joy at the thought of the triumph of equality? . . . I fear only that in acquiring so just a sentiment of his rights man may have lost something of the sense of his obligations. The heart is oppressed when one sees that in the progress of all things moral force has not been augmented."[1]

Moreover, the evils from which the world then suffered, and of which it had reason to complain, were all physical, all material. The rights of person and of property, material liberties, were all exposed, injured, and trampled upon more than they are to-day in certain countries, I willingly admit. But the soul, the conscience, the heart, were

[1] Michelet, *History of France*, Vol. II, p. 622.

sound, pure, unassailable, and free from that frightful interior corruption which preys upon them in our own day. Each one knew what he was to believe, what he could know, and what he ought to think of all those problems of life and of human destiny which to-day are so many sources of torment to the souls that have been paganized anew. Misfortune, poverty, and oppression, which are as far from being extirpated to-day as they were at that time, were not looked upon by mankind then as being a horrible fatality of which he was the innocent victim. He suffered from them, but he understood them; he might be overwhelmed, he could not be driven to despair by them; for heaven was still left him, and none of the paths had as yet been intercepted which conducted him from the prison of the body to the home of the soul. There was an immense moral healthfulness, which neutralized all the maladies of the social body, which opposed to them an all-powerful antidote, a real, a universal, and perpetual consolation, in the Faith. This Faith, which had penetrated the world, which reclaimed all men without exception, and which had permeated all the pores of society like a beneficent sap, offered for every infirmity a remedy which was sure and simple, the same for all, within the reach of all, and understood and accepted by all.

To-day the evil still exists; it is not only present, but is known, studied, analyzed with extreme care, so that a perfect dissection, an exact autopsy, might be made. But, before this great body becomes a corpse, where are the remedies? Its new doctors have spent four centuries in desiccating it, in forcing from it that divine and salutary sap which supplied its life. What is to be substituted?

It is time now to review and pass judgment upon the course which humanity has been forced to take, and the paths by which it has been led. The Christian nations

have permitted their mother to be dethroned. Those tender and powerful hands which held a sword, ever ready to avenge their wrongs, and a balm to heal all their wounds, they have seen loaded with chains; her crown of flowers has been torn from her brow and steeped in the acid of reasoning, till every leaf has fallen from it, has withered and been lost. Philosophy, despotism, and anarchy have led her captive before men, and have loaded her with insults and ignominy. They have placed her in a dungeon which they call her tomb, and at the door of which all three stand guard.

And yet she has left in the world a void which nothing can fill. It is not those souls alone who have remained faithful to her that mourn her sorrows, but all who, having remained undefiled, yearn to breathe another atmosphere than that which has been rendered mortal by her absence; all who have not lost the sentiment of their dignity and of their immortal origin, and who long to be restored to it; and those sad souls especially who seek everywhere in vain a remedy for their sorrows, an explanation of their weariness and oppression, who find everywhere only the empty and blood-stained places of the ancient Faith, who will not and cannot be consoled, *quia non sunt!*

And yet, I firmly believe the day will come when humanity will demand its release from the dreary waste in which it has been enthralled; it will ask to hear again the songs of its infancy; it will long to breathe again the perfumes of its youth, to present its thirsty lips at the breast of its mother, that it may taste again before death that milk, so sweet and pure, which nourished its infancy. And the prison doors of that mother will be broken by the shock of so many suffering souls; she will come forth more beautiful, more powerful, more merciful than ever. It will no longer be the naïve and fresh beauty of her

young years, after the painful labors of the first centuries; but rather the grave and saintly beauty of a courageous woman, who has read again the history of the martyrs and confessors, and has added thereto her own page. In her eyes will be discerned the trace of tears, on her brow the furrows wrought by her sufferings; but because of these she will appear only the more worthy of the homage and veneration of those who, like her, have suffered.

She will resume her glorious career, a new career, the course of which is known only to God. But whilst abiding the time when the world shall again demand that she preside over its destinies, her faithful children know that they may at all times receive infinite help and consolation from her. Moreover, being the children of light, they will not be troubled by what the unbelieving world calls her decadence; in the midst of the darkness which it has thrown around them, they will not allow themselves either to be dazzled, or led astray by any of the deceptive meteors of the stormy night. Calm and confident, they will keep their eyes fixed with an unshaken hope upon that eternal orient which never ceases to shine for them, and in which the generations seated in the shadow of death will also some day discover the one sacred sun ready to inundate with its victorious light the ingratitude of men.

However, I have no ambition to solve what is called the problem of the age, to give the key to all the contradictions of the minds of our days. These great thoughts are far from my feeble heart. I even dare to think that all the projects which they have advanced are smitten with a radical sterility. All the most comprehensive and the most progressive systems that human wisdom has brought to light, and which it has endeavored to substitute for religion, have never been able to interest any save the learned, the ambitious, or at most the happy ones of the

world. But the great majority of the human race will never be counted in any of these categories. The great majority of mankind are suffering, suffering from moral afflictions as much as from physical ills. The first bread of man is sorrow, and his first need is to be consoled. Which, let me ask, of these systems has ever consoled an afflicted heart or filled the void of a desolate soul? Which of these learned men has ever taught his followers to wipe away a single tear? Christianity alone, since the foundation of the world, has promised to console man in the inevitable afflictions of life by purifying the inclinations of his heart, and alone has kept its promise. Before thinking, then, of replacing it, we ought first to be able to banish sorrow from the earth.

Such are the thoughts with which I have been inspired in writing the life of Elizabeth of Hungary, who loved much and suffered much, but whose religion purified all her afflictions and consoled all her sufferings. I offer to my brothers in the Faith this book, foreign to the spirit of the times in which we live, as much by its subject as by its form. But simplicity, humility, and charity, the wonders of which I have here endeavored to recount, are, like the God Who inspires them, above time and place. May this work only bear to some simple or sad souls a reflection of the sweet emotions that I have experienced in writing it; may it ascend towards the eternal throne as a humble and timid spark of that ancient Catholic flame which is not dead in all hearts.

May 1, 1836.

Anniversary of the Translation of St. Elizabeth.[1]

[1] It occurred on the same day, six centuries ago, in 1236.

LIFE OF
SAINT ELIZABETH
OF HUNGARY
DUCHESS OF THURINGIA

Respondens Jesus dixit; Confiteor tibi, Pater Domine coeli et terrae, quia abscondisti haec a sapientibus et prudentibus, et revalasti ea parvulis. — S. Matt. XI, 25.

CHAPTER I

Thuringia under the Reign of Duke Hermann; Hungary under that of King Andrew; Birth of Dear[1] St. Elizabeth, and her Removal to Eisenach

Quasi stella matutina in medio nebulae.

Ecclus. L, 6.

Elizabeth was the daughter of a noble king and was of noble lineage; but she was yet more noble because of her faith and her religion, and her most noble lineage she ennobled by her life, illustrated by her miracles, and embellished by her grace and sanctity.

Jean Lefèvre, *Ann. of Hainault*, I, XLVI.

Among the princes who reigned in Germany at the commencement of the thirteenth century, there was none more powerful or more renowned than Hermann, Landgrave[2] of Thuringia and Hesse, Count Palatine of Saxony. The courage and the talents which he had received with his inheritance from his illustrious father, Louis *the Mailed*, one of the most remarkable princes of the Middle Ages; the special protection of Innocent III; his close relation-

[1] I have felt that it was but proper that I should preserve the naïve title that was made use of by all the ancient German writers, in speaking of our Saint, from Tauler and Suso down to F. Martin of Kochem, — *die liebe H. Elisabeth.*

[2] The title of *landgraf* has no exact equivalent in French, especially in the feminine; but as the rank and authority of the princes who bore it was similar in all respects to those of dukes, I have generally translated the terms *landgraf* and *landgraefin* by those of *duke* and *duchess*, which are found, moreover, used in this sense by some of the German authors of this period. See the Mss. of Heidelberg.

ship with the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, whose nephew he was, with King Ottacar of Bohemia, and with the houses of Saxony, Bavaria, and Austria; the position of his vast States in the centre of Germany, which extended from the Lahn to the Elbe, all assigned him an important political rôle. Although he was not one of the seven Electors of the Holy Roman Empire, it was his influence, nevertheless, that determined their choice, and his alliance was regarded as decisive for the success of the different claimants of the imperial crown. He was in this way, more than once, the arbitrator of the destinies of the Empire. "When a king is found to be too short or too long," says a contemporary poem, "or who does little for the welfare of the country and of all the world, the sovereign of Thuringia takes from him his crown and gives it to whom he will." It was chiefly to him that the celebrated Emperor Frederick II owed his election in 1211.

It was not alone his power which drew to him the respect of Germany; he was distinguished likewise by his boundless generosity, his learning, and his piety. He never retired to rest without having listened to, or read himself, some selection from the Holy Scriptures. During his youth he had studied at Paris, which was then the chief sanctuary of both sacred and profane learning. He had acquired there an intense love of poetry; and during his entire reign he exerted himself to have the heroic poems of the ancient Germans collected with care, and for this purpose maintained a number of writers, who were occupied in transcribing the verses of the old masters. Living at the period in which Catholic and chivalric poetry shed its greatest splendor over Germany, he appreciated fully its immortal beauty. If he could not, like the Emperor Henry VI and a host of princes and nobles of his time, take his place among the love-singers (Minnesaenger), and like them hear his verses repeated

in the castle and the cottage, at least none of them surpassed him in admiration of the *gay science*, or in his munificence and affection towards the poets; they formed his habitual society and were the object of his most earnest solicitude. His court was a sort of home for them all, and during the whole of his tempestuous life he never lost this predilection of his early years. They emulated each other in extolling his glory and his accomplishments, for his name is found in the *Titurel*, the *Parsifal*, and all the most popular monuments of the national poetry; and Walther von der Vogelweide, the greatest poet of that period said of him: "The other princes are very merciful, but there is none so generous as he; he was so in times past, and he is so still. . . . No one suffers from his caprices. . . . The flower of Thuringia is brilliant even amid the snow; the summer and winter of its glory are sweet, and beautiful, like its springtime."

It happened in the year 1206 that the Duke Hermann, finding himself in his castle of Wartburg, above the city of Eisenach, gathered together at his court six of the most renowned poets of Germany. They were Henry Schreiber, Walther von der Vogelweide, Wolfram of Eschenbach, Reinhart of Zwetzen, all four of whom were knights of ancient lineage; Bitteroeff, an officer of his house, and Henry of Ofterdingen, a simple citizen of a pious family of Eisenach.[1]

An intense rivalry soon sprang up between the five poets of noble birth and the poor Henry, who was at least their equal in point of talent and popularity. Tradition accuses them even of having wished to attempt his life, and records that one day when they all fell upon him, he

[1] An attempt has recently been made by M. de Spaun to claim for Austria the birth and the glory of this celebrated poet, and to attribute to him the publication of the poem of the Niebelungen. See *Heinrich von Ofterdingen und das Niebelungen Lied.* Linz., 1840.

escaped only by taking refuge near the Duchess Sophia (for the Duke himself was absent), and by concealing himself in the folds of her cloak. To decide their differences, they agreed to engage in a public and decisive contest, in the presence of the Duke and his court, and with the assistance of the executioner, rope in hand, who was to hang forthwith him whose verses should be pronounced inferior to those of his rivals; thus demonstrating that in their eyes glory and life were inseparable. The Duke gave his consent to this agreement and presided at the solemn contest, which was noised abroad through all Germany, and at which a great number of the nobility and chivalry came to assist. They sang in turn, and in the most diverse methods, the praises of their favorite princess, the great mysteries of religion, the legitimate union of the soul with the body after the resurrection, the inexhaustible mercy of God, the power of repentance, the dominion of the Cross, and especially the glories of Mary, the well-beloved of God, ninefold more beautiful than mercy, which itself is more beautiful than the sun. These songs, collected together by those who heard them, have been preserved to our own time, under the title of *The War of Wartburg*.[1]

Their collection still forms at the present day one of the most important monuments of German literature, as a treasury of the ancient and popular beliefs, and at the same time as an unexceptionable testimony of the important rôle that poetry played in the society, the learning, and the faith of that period. It was impossible to decide upon the merits of the rival minstrels, and it was agreed that Henry of Ofterdingen should go to Transylvania in quest of the celebrated master Klingsohr, who was so expert in the seven liberal arts, and especially in astronomy and necromancy, that the spirits, so it was said, were

[1] *Der Singerkriec uf Wartburg.* Published in 1830 by M. Ettmüller.

obliged to yield obedience to his knowledge, and the King of Hungary gave him a pension of three thousand marcs of silver as the price of his services. A year's time was granted Henry to accomplish the journey; and on the appointed day he appeared at the gates of Eisenach with the great scholar.

While all the German chivalry were anxiously watching this contest, the memory of which was to be perpetuated to the most distant posterity, the Lord, ever solicitous for the glory of His elect, had destined it in a special manner to throw a halo of poetry and of popular glory around the cradle of one of His most humble servants.

Klingsohr having arrived at Eisenach, and taken quarters at the inn of Henry Hellgref, to the right of the gate of Saint George, made his appearance the same evening in the garden of his host, where there were present many of the noblemen of Hesse and Thuringia, who had come expressly to see him, as also officers of the court of the Prince, and many citizens, who, according to the custom still prevalent in social Germany, were there enjoying the evening convivially together. These good people surrounded him, begging him to give them any news he might have. Whereupon he arose and stood for a long time contemplating the stars. Then he said to them: "I will tell you something new and joyful as well. I see a beautiful star which rises in Hungary, and which throws its light from there to Marburg, and from Marburg over the whole world. Know that this very night there is born to the King of Hungary a daughter who shall be named Elizabeth, who shall be given in marriage to the son of the Prince here; who shall be a saint, and whose sanctity shall rejoice and console the whole Christian world."[1]

[1] It would undoubtedly be superfluous for me to declare here that I bow before the prohibition pronounced by the Church, notably in the admirable bull of Sixtus V, *Coeli et terrae creator Deus*, against every-

His listeners heard these words with great joy; and the next day, early in the morning, the knights went up to Wartburg to repeat them to the Landgrave, whom they met as he was going to Mass. Not wishing to detain him, they assisted thereat with him; but as soon as it was finished, they recounted to him what had occurred the previous evening. The Prince was surprised at hearing it, as were his whole court; and calling at once for his horse, he went himself, with a numerous escort, to find Master Klingsohr, and bring him back with him to Wartburg. The greatest honors were shown him, especially by the priests, who treated him as a bishop, says a contemporary. The Landgrave invited him to dine at his own table; and after the repast they talked a long time together. The Prince, whose paternal anxiety was now awakened, inquired how the affairs of Hungary were progressing, what the King was engaged in, whether he was still at peace with the infidels, or whether war had recommenced. Klingsohr answered fully all his inquiries; after which he gave his attention to the great trial which had brought him to Eisenach. He presided over the new contest which was entered into, and succeeded in appeasing the hostility of the rivals of Henry, his client, and in causing his merit to be publicly recognized. He then returned to Hungary as he had come; that is to say, according to the popular tradition, in a single night.

Hungary was at that time governed by King Andrew II, whose reign was as pleasing to God as to his people. Illustrious for the wars he waged against the infidel nations who surrounded the frontiers of his kingdom, he was yet more so for his profound piety and for his generosity towards the Church and the poor. Some of the immense

thing appertaining to astrology; but I could not pass over in silence an ancient tradition, which has been reproduced by all the writers on this subject.

gold mines, which still enrich Hungary at the present day, were discovered during his reign, and his faithful people did not fail to recognize therein a recompense accorded by God to his virtues. His miners came one day to tell him that in digging in the side of the mountain they had heard a voice calling out to them to take courage, for the rock there enclosed an inexhaustible mass of gold which God intended King Andrew should possess as a reward for his piety and charity. The King rejoiced greatly at the divine favor, and profited by his new riches to found churches and convents, and to enlarge his charities.

His wife was Gertrude of Merania, or of Andechs, a daughter of the most illustrious house, perhaps, of the Empire at that period. She was a direct descendant of Charlemagne, and possessed the most beautiful provinces of Southern Germany. Gertrude's father, Berchtold III, was the Duke of Meran and Carinthia, Margrave of Istria, and Sovereign of the Tyrol. His father, Berchtold II, had refused, in 1198, the imperial crown which the princes had unanimously offered him. One of her sisters, Hedwiges, afterwards canonized, was the Duchess of Silesia and Poland; and another, Agnes, — celebrated for her beauty and her misfortunes, — was the wife of Philip Augustus, King of France.[1] Gertrude was not inferior to her husband in piety. Historians extol her courage and intrepid spirit. The tenderest love united these two noble souls.

In the year 1207, on the day and at the hour announced by Klingsohr at Eisenach, Queen Gertrude[2] gave birth to a daughter, who at her baptism received the

[1] See the genealogical table of the maternal family of Elizabeth in the Appendix.

[2] According to German historians Elizabeth was born at Presburg; but according to the Hungarian her birth occurred at Saros-Patak, in the county of Zemplen.

name of ELIZABETH.[1] The ceremonies attending her baptism were conducted upon a scale of great magnificence; she was carried to the church under the most beautiful canopy that could be found in Buda, at that time one of the principal emporiums of oriental luxuries.

From her birth this predestined child gave evidence of the sublime destiny which God had in store for her. Names consecrated by religion were the first words that arrested her attention, the first, too, which she tried to lisp as her tongue was loosened; and when she was able to speak, for a long time it was only to recite her prayers. She listened with wonderful attention to the first instructions that were given her upon the Faith, although an interior light was undoubtedly revealing to her already these holy truths. When but three years of age, as the historians assure us, she showed her compassion for the poor and endeavored to relieve their misfortunes by her gifts. Thus the germ of her whole life might be discerned in this her cradle-life, whose first act was an almsdeed, and whose first utterance was a prayer; and so she seems to have been permitted by God to possess even at that age those graces which she was destined later on to distribute so abundantly over the earth. Almost from the day of her birth the wars in which Hungary had been engaged were brought to a close; internal dissensions, too, were allayed. This tranquillity was soon developed in private as well as in public life; violations of the law of God, excesses, and blasphemies became less frequent, and King Andrew saw fully realized all the desires which a Christian king could have.

Simple and pious souls did not fail then to remark the coincidence of this peace and this sudden prosperity with

[1] In the Hungarian *Erzebèt* or *Erzsi;* according to the Hebrew etymology this name signifies *full of,* or *satiated with, God.* This is the sense adopted by Pope Gregory IX, in the Bull of Canonization.

the birth of a child whose piety was so precocious; and when at a later day the promises of her early years were realized in so wonderful a manner, the Hungarians loved to recall that no royal child had ever brought more graces upon her country.

In the meantime the Duke Hermann neglected no means of ascertaining whether the prediction of Klingsohr had been accomplished, whether a princess had been born in Hungary upon the day which he had specified. And when he was apprised not only of her birth, but also of the marks of devotion which she already manifested, and the happiness which she seemed to have brought from heaven to her country, he conceived an intense desire to see the complete fulfilment of the prediction, and that his young son[1] should become the husband of Elizabeth. Travellers who arrived from time to time from that country, which was hardly any more isolated then from the rest of Europe than it is at the present day, frequently brought him news concerning the daughter of King Andrew. One day especially, a monk who came from Hungary related to him how, after having been blind for four years, he had suddenly recovered his sight by the mere touch of the young Princess. "All Hungary," said he, "rejoices in this child, for she has brought peace with her!"

This was sufficient to decide Hermann to send to the King of Hungary an embassy, composed of lords and noble women, to ask the hand of Elizabeth in the name of his son Louis, and to bring her back with them, if possible, to Thuringia. He chose for this mission Count Reinhard of Muhlberg, Gaultier of Varila, his cup-bearer, and Madam Bertha, widow of Egilolf of Beindeliben, who was, according to the narrative of the chroniclers, known for her prudence and modesty, and besides beautiful, pious and honorable in all things. She had as companions two

[1] Born in 1200.

noble and beautiful young ladies and two squires. The ambassadors had a retinue of at least thirty horsemen. All along their route they were received by the princes and prelates whose territories they traversed, with the distinction due to their own rank and to that of their sovereign. Having arrived safely at Presburg, they were received with royal hospitality, and from the morrow of their arrival a great number of masses were celebrated.

When they had explained to the King the object of their mission, he called together a council to consider the request of the Duke of Thuringia. Klingsohr earnestly supported it. In a discourse which may serve descriptive of the state of Thuringia at that period, he dwelt at length upon the wealth and power of Hermann; he enumerated the twelve counts who were his vassals, without counting the barons and knights; the strong fortresses which defended his country; he described how fertile the country had appeared to him, well cultivated, surrounded with beautiful forests, and supplied with well-stocked fish ponds; and how comfortable the people were, drinking freely of beer and eating good white bread. He then spoke in the highest terms of the personal character of the Duke, and added that his son appeared to him to possess all the qualities that could be expected from one of his age. Queen Gertrude declared herself likewise in favor of the Duke's request, and the King, yielding to her influence, consented to the separation from his dearly loved daughter. But before permitting her to depart, he wished to celebrate a feast in her honor; and having gathered together all the knights and ladies of his court, he instituted the most brilliant festivities. Games, dances, music especially, and the songs of the minstrels continued for three days, at the end of which the Thuringian ambassadors begged permission of the King to take their departure. The little Elizabeth, then but four years of

age, was brought, wrapped in a silken robe embroidered with gold and silver; she was laid in a cradle of solid gold, and thus she was confided to the Thuringians. The King said to the noble Varila, "I confide to your knightly honor my supreme consolation." The Queen, also in tears, recommended her child to his care; to which the knight replied, "I will most gladly keep her under my protection, and will always be faithful to her." He kept his word, as we shall see. Before departing from Presburg the ambassadors received from the King and Queen presents of great value, both for themselves and for Duke Hermann, as the dowry of the young Princess. Contemporary narratives enumerate these presents in detail, declaring that nothing so precious or so beautiful had ever before been seen in Thuringia, from which it may be inferred that this marriage signalized the introduction into Germany of a new development of industry and of oriental luxury, which, at a period so remote, cannot be without importance in the history of German art and industry. The Queen added a thousand marcs of silver, promising that if she lived she would double the sum from her private treasury.

The ambassadors finally took their departure. When they came they brought two conveyances with them; on their return they took thirteen, so great had been the additions to their baggage. The King had confided to them thirteen noble young ladies of Hungary to serve as companions to his daughter, who were endowed and married in Thuringia by Duke Hermann.

Their journey home was accomplished without accident. When Duke Hermann and the Duchess Sophia received the news of their approach and the success of their mission, they at once threw themselves on their knees and thanked God for having heard their prayers. Then they proceeded without delay from Wartburg to

Eisenach, to receive there their envoys whom God had so blessed.

The joy at having obtained a young duchess almost caused them to lose their heads, according to the account given by the official chroniclers of the court. They conducted the entire retinue to the inn of Hellgref, where Klingsohr had made his prediction, and which was the best of that time. There the Landgrave took the little Elizabeth in his arms, and pressing her to his heart thanked God again for having given her to him. Then he returned to Wartburg to prepare requisite accommodations; but the Duchess Sophia spent the night with the child The following morning she conducted her to the castle, where the Duke had assembled his whole court, and whither he had invited the principal citizens of Eisenach and their wives, that they might see the child whom God and the King of Hungary had sent to him. The betrothal of the Princess, aged four years, with the young Duke Louis, who was eleven, was solemnly celebrated, and they were placed side by side in the same bed. Then, as at Presburg, banquets, dances, and sumptuous feasts were given, at which poetry, the chief ornament of the Thuringian court, bore a conspicuous part, with its usual éclat. From that day Elizabeth was never absent from him who, later on, was to become her husband, and whom from that time she called her brother.

It was a beautiful and salutary custom of Catholic ages and of Catholic families to give a common education to those whose lives were to be spent together; a beneficent inspiration, which associated in the mind of man the pure name of sister with the sacred name of wife; which permitted nothing in life to be lost; which utilized all the fresh and fugitive emotions of fraternity to the profit of the serious and long duties of the married state; which seized at once upon that which is most impetuous and

ardent in the human heart, that it might tranquillize and sanctify it; uniting thus in the ties of a common love that which is purest with that which is most intimate in life, its sweetest memories with its holiest affections.

CHAPTER II

How Dear St. Elizabeth honored God in her Childhood

Elegit eam Deus et praeelegit.
Off. of Holy Women.

V ans avoit d'aage droit
Sainte Ysabiaux la Dieu aimée
La fille le roi de Hongrie
Quant a bien faire commensa.
Rutebeuf, *Mss. Bibl. roy.* 7633.

From the very bosom of the family whence Providence had thus taken away the little Elizabeth, two causes arose to contribute in good time to the development in her soul of the precious dispositions which had been recognized in her from her birth. She had in the first place an illustrious example of the union of all the Christian virtues with sovereign majesty in her maternal aunt, Hedwiges, Duchess of Poland, who was destined to merit later on the homage of the faithful, and whose austere and fervent piety was even then a source of glory for her family, and a subject of edification which Elizabeth was able to comprehend and to imitate.

But besides the influence of this example, God permitted an unforeseen misfortune to come, to throw a shadow of sorrow over the first days of her life, and cause her to comprehend the instability of human greatness. Two years after she had been taken from Hungary to Thuringia, her mother, the Queen Gertrude, died a most cruel death, assassinated in the flower of her age by the

subjects of her husband. The cause of her death is differently recounted. According to some she was slain by the Ban of Croatia and Dalmatia, who wished thus to avenge the honor of his wife, outraged by the Patriarch Berchtold, brother of the Queen. But according to a much more authentic account, she was the victim of a conspiracy against the life of her husband, and in order to give him time to escape, she threw herself in the way to receive the attack of the conspirators.[1] This sad news soon reached the ears of Elizabeth, and all the historians agree in regarding the impression produced upon her thereby as one of the principal sources of the grave thoughts and profound piety which appeared in all the actions of the child.

Immediately upon her arrival, the Landgrave selected seven young misses, from the most distinguished families of his court, of about the same age as his future daughter-in-law, among whom was his own daughter Agnes, to have them educated with her. One of them, Guta, who was but five years of age, a year older than Elizabeth, remained in her service until shortly before her death; and when God had called her to Him, and the fame of her sanctity had attracted the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities, this same Guta, publicly questioned, recounted her recollections of her childhood. It is to this deposition, carefully preserved and transmitted to the Holy See, that we owe our knowledge of the details that I shall give of the occupation of the early years of our Elizabeth.

Even at this very tender age, all her thoughts and all her emotions seemed to be concentrated in the desire to serve God and merit heaven. As often as she could, she went into the chapel of the castle, and there, throw-

[1] This last account is that given by contemporary writers, notably Cæsarius of Heisterbach.

ing herself at the foot of the altar, she had a large psalter opened before her, although she was not yet able to read, and then, clasping her little hands and raising her eyes to heaven, she gave herself up, with precocious recollection, to meditation and prayer.

In playing with her companions, as for instance in jumping on one foot, she would manage it so that all should be obliged to turn towards the chapel; and when she found it closed, she would kiss with fervor the lock, the door, and the exterior walls, through love for the hidden God who dwelt there. In all her games it was the thought of God that ruled her; she was anxious to win for Him, for she gave all that she won to poor little girls, imposing upon them the duty of reciting a certain number of *Paters* and *Aves*. She sought constantly at such times to draw near to God; and when any obstacle had prevented her from saying as many prayers and making as many genuflections as she wished, she would say to her little companions, "Let us lie down on the ground, to see which of us is the tallest." Then placing herself successively by the side of each of the little girls, on the ground, she availed herself of this opportunity to humble herself before God and to recite an *Ave*. When she became a wife and mother, she was fond of recounting these innocent ruses of her childhood.

Oftentimes also she led her friends to the cemetery, and said to them, "Remember that we too shall one day be but dust." Then, when they had reached the charnel-house, she would say, "Here lie the bones of the dead; these people were once living like us, and are now dead as we shall be; that is why we must love God. Let us kneel down, and say together: Lord, by Thy cruel death, and by Thy dear mother Mary, deliver these poor souls from their sufferings; Lord, by Thy five sacred wounds save us." And this, says a writer, was her chief delight

and enjoyment. These children recited the prayer with her, and soon, dazzled by the ascendency which she held over them, they told how the child Jesus often came to meet her, saluted her tenderly, and played with her. But she strictly forbade them to speak of such things.

Away from her recreations, she sought to learn as many prayers as she could. All who were willing to talk with her of God and of His holy law became dear to her by that alone. She had undertaken to say a certain number of prayers every day; and when she had been prevented from fulfilling this voluntary task before night, and her attendants obliged her to retire, she did not fail to accomplish it while they thought her asleep, remembering her Lord, like David, in her bed. She realized already the importance of that modesty which is prescribed for Christian virgins, and always arranged her veil in such a manner as to expose to view as little as possible of her childish features.

That boundless charity which afterwards became a part of her very life already inflamed her predestined soul. She distributed to the poor all the money that she received from her adopted parents, or which she could obtain from them under any pretext whatever. She made frequent visits to the larder and kitchen of the castle to gather up any remnants that she might find, and these she carried away carefully and gave to the poor — a practice which cost her the displeasure of the stewards of the ducal household.[1]

As she advanced in years, growing in virtue and piety, the more she lived within herself, recollected in the presence of her God, whose bountiful graces adorned her soul.

It was the custom in those days for princesses and

[1] The manuscripts of Heidelberg relate at this period of her life the miracle of the roses, which more trustworthy authorities lead us to ascribe to a period later by several years. See Chapter VIII.

daughters of noble birth to choose by lot a special patron among the Holy Apostles. Elizabeth, who had already chosen the Blessed Virgin as her protectress and supreme advocate, had a veneration also, and, as a manuscript tells us, a special regard for St. John the Evangelist, because of the original purity which distinguished that Apostle. She therefore earnestly besought our Lord to grant that her choice might fall upon St. John, and then with humility she joined her companions as they proceeded to the election.

For this purpose twelve candles were used, upon each of which the name of one of the Apostles was written, and all were placed indiscriminately upon the altar, to which each of the postulants advanced and made a chance selection.

The candle which bore the name of St. John fell at once to the lot of Elizabeth; but not being satisfied with this first accomplishment of her wishes, she repeated the test twice, and each time with the same result. Seeing herself thus committed, as it were, to the care of her dearly loved Apostle by a special manifestation of divine Providence, she felt her devotion increase towards him, and throughout her whole life she cherished it faithfully; she never refused anything which was asked of her in the name of St. John, whether it was to pardon an injury or to confer a benefit.

Placed under this sacred patronage, the pious child saw therein a new motive to render herself worthy of heaven, and to redouble, accordingly, her Christian practices and her voluntary privations. She never failed to sanctify the name of the Lord by a prudent reserve in her speech. Sundays and holy days she put aside some of her ornaments, preferring to honor God by humility of spirit rather than by the beauty of her dress. Guta tells us that on these occasions she wore neither gloves nor lace ruffles, except it were after Mass.

Every day she sought some means of mortifying her will in little things, in order to prepare herself for greater sacrifices. When in her games she was victorious, and her success made her very happy, she would suddenly stop, saying, "Now while I am having such good luck I will stop for the love of God." She was fond of dancing — a universal custom in the country in which she was brought up; but when she had danced one round, she would say, "One round is enough for the world. I will deprive myself of the others in honor of Jesus Christ."

However, the young Louis, her betrothed, was always near her, and Elizabeth found pleasure in being near him. She called him *my dear brother*, and he called her *my loved one*, and *my dear sister*.

Such was the early childhood of this young girl. God had in store for her a destiny pure and pleasing in His sight; but He had counted her days, and erelong He would call her to take her place in heaven. In the meantime He would pour forth upon her the treasures of His special graces. Her life was to be too brief to permit of those great interior revolutions which have marked the life and the conversion of some of the most illustrious saints.

No interior struggle came to dim the heavenly light which guided her from the cradle to the tomb. All seemed but a natural and harmonious sequence in her saintly career.

She is not the only one of God's servants who thus early in life have borne testimony to His mercy and power; and certainly for Christian eyes there is no sweeter vision than the dawn of these great lights whose destiny it is to illumine heaven and earth.

CHAPTER III

How Dear St. Elizabeth had to suffer for God before her Marriage

Euntes ibant et flebant, mittentes semina sua. Venientes autem venient cum exultatione portentes manipulos suos.

Psalm CXXV, 6, 7.

Elizabeth had scarcely attained her ninth year when she witnessed the death of the father of her betrothed, the Landgrave Hermann (1216). He had seen one night in a dream the bodies of the executed criminals, exposed in the place of execution outside the gate of Eisenach, suddenly transformed into white-robed virgins. These virgins were approaching his bed, having at their head Our Lady and St. Catherine, to whom he was especially devoted, and thus they addressed him: "You must build for us a house here on this site, and place therein virgins who shall be devoted to us; and then, in a little while, you shall be united with us."

The Duke executed their command faithfully. He founded, on the spot indicated, a convent for women under the invocation of St. Catherine, installed there as first abbess a young widow, Imagina, Duchess of Brabant, and designated this sanctuary as the place of his own sepulture and that of his descendants.[1] After which he died, and was buried as he had directed.

[1] Changed into a theatre by the duke John George II. To-day the site is occupied by an inn known as *Zum Stern*.

The young Louis was scarce sixteen years of age[1] when, being the eldest son, he inherited his father's estate. His two younger brothers, Henry Raspe and Conrad, each received an appanage and the government of a part of the States of the Landgrave, according to the custom of the house of Thuringia.

The death of Hermann was a misfortune for Elizabeth. That illustrious and pious prince had always loved her tenderly because of her precocious piety; he had always treated her as his own daughter, and no one during his life had dared to place any obstacles in the way of the religious practices of the young princess. But after his death it was no longer the same. Although Louis, whom she regarded as her betrothed and her lord, had become the sovereign of the country, her youth still made her to some extent dependent upon his mother, the Duchess Sophia, daughter of the celebrated Otto of Wittelsbach, Duke of Bavaria. This princess regarded Elizabeth's extreme devotion with disapproval, and often made her feel her displeasure. The young Agnes, sister of Louis, who was brought up with her future sister-in-law, and whose remarkable beauty had rendered her more amenable to the seductive vanities of the world, constantly and bitterly reproached her for her meek and retiring manner. She told her bluntly that she was fit only to become a chambermaid or servant.

The other young ladies of noble family, the companions of the two princesses, seeing that Elizabeth each day took less part in their games, their dances, and their gay and frivolous life, repeated what they heard Agnes say, and openly mocked her. Furthermore, the most influential officers of the ducal court, disregarding her royal birth, her sex, and her extreme youth, unblushingly pursued her with their derision and their open marks of disrespect.

[1] He was born October 28, 1200.

They all agreed that there was nothing in her that resembled a princess.

In fact, Elizabeth manifested a sort of aversion for the society of the young countesses and daughters of noble parentage who were given her as companions; she was much more inclined to mingle with the children of some of the humble citizens of Eisenach, and even with those attached to her service. She loved especially to surround herself with the children of poor women, to whom she distributed her alms. The injuries which were heaped upon her only served to render this companionship sweeter and dearer to her. Moreover, she cherished in her heart no sentiment of pride, of wounded self-love, or even of impatience. This first trial of the injustice of men and of the miseries of the world became as a new link between her God and herself; she drew therefrom new strength to serve and to love Him. As a lily among thorns, says one of her historians, the innocent Elizabeth flourished and bloomed amidst bitterness, and spread about her the sweet and fragrant perfume of patience and humility.

About this time she gave an example of her humility, which all the narrators of her time have carefully recorded. It was the Feast of the Assumption, a day of great indulgences in the churches consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, on which offerings were made to her of the fruits and grains of the year.

The Duchess Sophia said to Agnes and Elizabeth, "Let us go down to the town, to Eisenach; let us visit the Church of Our Dear Lady, and hear the beautiful Mass of the Teutonic Knights who honor her in a special manner. Perhaps we may hear a sermon upon her. Put on your finest garments and your golden crowns."

The two young princesses, having dressed themselves as they were directed to do, went down to the city with her, and having entered the church knelt upon a *prie-Dieu* in

front of a large crucifix. At the sight of this image of the dying Saviour, Elizabeth removed her crown, and placing it upon her stool, prostrated herself on the floor with no other head ornament than her hair. The Duchess, seeing her in this position, said to her abruptly: "What are you doing, Miss Elizabeth? What new exhibition is this? Do you want to make every one laugh at you? Young ladies should hold themselves erect and not get down on to the floor like fools, or like old nuns who throw themselves down after the fashion of tired jades. Can you not do as we do, instead of acting like an ill-bred child? Is your crown too heavy? What is the use of doubling yourself up like a clown?"

Elizabeth arose and meekly answered her mother-in-law: "Dear lady, be not annoyed with me. Behold before my eyes my God and my King, the sweet and merciful Jesus, Who is crowned with sharp thorns, whilst I, who am but a vile creature, would remain before Him crowned with pearls, with gold, and precious stones! My crown would be a mockery of His." And she immediately burst into a flood of tears, for the love of Christ had now wounded her tender heart. She knelt again upon her stool as before, allowed Sophia and Agnes to talk as much as they pleased, and continued to pray with such fervor, that having held a fold of her cloak before her eyes, she saturated it with her tears.

The two princesses, in order to avoid a painful contrast in the eyes of the people, felt themselves compelled to do as she did, and to hold their cloak over their eyes — which it would have been quite as agreeable for them not to have done, adds the chronicler.

Such traits could only help to embitter the hatred which she had already inspired in worldly souls. This hatred seemed to become more and more intensified as she grew in years; and when at length she had reached

the marriageable age, it developed into a general outburst, as it were, of persecutions and injuries from the whole court of Thuringia. The family of the Landgrave, as well as his counsellors and principal vassals, all declared against her.

They loudly declared that she ought to be sent back to her father, and the promise given revoked; that such a béguine[1] was not made for their prince; that he ought to have a wife well connected, rich, and of truly royal manners; that he would do better to marry the daughter of a neighboring prince, who in case of need could render him assistance, whereas Elizabeth's father was too far away for that, and for the same reason would be unable to revenge the injury done his daughter, even were he so inclined; moreover, that he seemed to have forgotten her, and had failed to send her the additional dowry which her mother had promised. The intimate companions of the young Duke availed themselves of every possible occasion to induce him to give up Elizabeth, and to send her back to Hungary, because she was too timid and reserved. The Duchess mother exerted every effort to compel her to take the veil in some convent of women. Agnes especially pursued her with contempt and with injuries; she constantly repeated to her that she had missed her vocation in not becoming a servant. "Miss Elizabeth," said she to her one day, "if you imagine that the Prince,

[1] In the first half of the thirteenth century, precisely at the time of Elizabeth, there appeared in most of the cities of France and Germany an association of virgins or of widows under the name of *béguines*, who took the vows of religion and bound themselves to all the practices of monastic life, except the cloister. They remained in their families, or in quarters especially set apart for them under the name of *béguinages*, similar to those which are still to be seen at Ghent and at Bruges. They soon took St. Elizabeth as their patroness, and thus transformed, for the humble princess, into a title of glory a name which her enemies had applied to her as an insult.

my brother, is going to marry you, you are greatly mistaken, unless you change very much from what you are."

Such remarks as this she was compelled to hear every day. She felt the bitterness of her position deeply; she saw herself scarcely out of her childhood and already without support, without friends, without human consolation, exiled as it were from her native land, deprived of paternal protection, in the midst of a strange court, and exposed without defence to the insolence and persecution of the enemies of God, and her own. And she recognized all the more that her life could be but a pilgrimage in this inconstant world. She had recourse to her God; to Him she confided in silence her grief, opening her whole heart to Him. She strove to submit her own will to that of her heavenly Father, and she besought Him to accomplish in her that most sweet will by whatever trials He might be pleased to send her. Then, having found peace and resignation at the foot of the Cross, she would rejoin her maids and the poor girls whom she had chosen as her companions, and would redouble her caresses toward them, which, on the other hand, only caused the two princesses and the courtiers to redouble their invectives and their ridicule.

At this point one of her biographers interrupts his narrative to address to the Saint this prayer:

"O most dear St. Elizabeth! I honor thy virtuous youth, and I grieve with thee over thy humiliations and persecutions. Why did not I sanctify my early years, as thou didst! Why have I not suffered as patiently as thou wast wont to do all my contradictions! I beseech thee, by thy blessed childhood, to obliterate the sins of my youth, and by thy heroic patience to obtain for me pardon for my impatience and for all my faults."

CHAPTER IV

The Young Duke Louis remains Faithful to Dear St. Elizabeth; their Marriage

> Laetare cum muliere adolescentiae tuae . . .
> In amore ejus delectare jugiter.
>
> Prov. V, 18, 19.

God in His justice had received the prayers and the tears of His child Elizabeth, and did not fail to reward her resignation and patience. Alone, in the midst of all his court, the young Duke Louis had not allowed himself to be turned against her; and disappointing the hope and expectation of all, he remained faithful to her whom, from his infancy, he had regarded as his betrothed. His love for her each day grew stronger; and although, out of regard probably for his mother, he did not deem it prudent to manifest it publicly, this pure and holy affection nevertheless was taking deep root in his heart. He was as deaf to the sarcasms and the exhortations of his mother as he was to the advice of false friends, or to the voice of passion. He regarded with joy and admiration that which drew upon Elizabeth the injuries of the world, her extreme modesty, the absence of all display in her dress, her piety and charity; he thought within himself that he would be happy to learn these virtues from her. Her chaplain Berthold, who wrote her life, did not doubt that God had turned his heart towards the royal exile. For it was not only as his wife, and with a human and conjugal love, that he cherished her, but as his sister in Jesus Christ, and with an affection which seemed to have

been poured into his heart by the hand of the Most High. The more the wicked beset him with evil counsels, the more he felt his soul penetrated with fidelity and tenderness for this innocent stranger; the more he saw her hated by others, because of her virtue and piety, the more he felt the need of loving and protecting her.

Ere long he began to avail himself of every possible occasion, when he could do so without giving offence to his mother, to go and console her secretly in her moments of sadness. And thus alone, with no other witness than God, Who had already blessed this holy union, they talked of their secret and mutual love, and the Prince sought, by his tender and comforting words, to heal the wounds that others had inflicted upon this young soul. In these sweet relations she found an inexpressible consolation. Whenever he went on a journey any considerable distance from home, and passed through mercantile cities, he would purchase some object that seemed to him rare or precious, to present it to his betrothed. He never returned empty handed; it was a chaplet of coral, a little crucifix, or a devotional image; or perhaps a knife, a purse, gloves, or some pretty breast ornament, as a gold chain or pin; something, in fact, which she did not already possess. On his return she would run out joyfully to greet him; and he, clasping her in his arms, and caressing her tenderly, would present whatever he had brought home, as a pledge of his love and a proof that he had thought of her while away. Once, however, when the Duke was accompanied on his journey by several strangers, who were constantly with him till he reached home, he forgot to bring to Elizabeth his usual present. The Princess, rendered distrustful by persecution and injustice, felt keenly this neglect, which her enemies observed with delight, flattering themselves that it was an evidence of a change

in the feelings of Louis. Meeting the noble Gaultier of Varila, grand cup-bearer, who had brought her from Hungary, to whom the King, her father, had especially confided her, and who had always opposed to the utmost of his ability the intrigues of the other courtiers, she could not refrain from revealing her anxiety to her old friend. The good knight showed that he was touched by her affliction, and promised to speak of the matter to her lord. He soon had an opportunity of doing so, the Duke having taken him to a hunting party in the vicinity of Wartburg. As they were resting together, stretched upon the grass in a certain forest from which they could see before them Inselburg, the highest mountain of Thuringia, Gaultier said to the Duke, "Will it please you, my lord, to answer a question which I am going to ask you?" To which the good Prince replied, "Speak in all confidence. I will tell you anything you may wish me to." "Well, then," said the knight, "what do you propose to do with Mademoiselle Elizabeth, whom I brought to you? Do you intend to make her your wife, or will you release yourself from your promise and send her back to her father?" Louis sprang to his feet, and pointing towards Mount Inselburg, said, "Do you see that mountain which rises up there before us? Well, if it were a mass of gold from its base to its summit, and were to become mine on condition that I should send my Elizabeth away, I would not do it. Let them think or say of her what they will, I say this: I love her, and there is nothing on earth that I love more. I shall cling to Elizabeth. She is dearer to me because of her virtue and piety than the possession of all the countries and all the riches of this world." "I beseech you, my lord," replied Gaultier, "to permit me to repeat to her your words." "Do so; say to her that I will not listen to what is said to me against her, and give her this as a further pledge of my faith." As he spoke he thrust

his hand into his wallet and drew forth a little double-faced mirror, mounted in silver, beneath the glass of which there was a picture of our crucified Lord.[1] The knight hastened to find Elizabeth, and repeating to her what he had heard, gave her the mirror. She smiled joyfully, and thanked the noble Gaultier most heartily for having acted thus the part of a father and a friend; then opening the mirror, and seeing the picture of Jesus Christ, she kissed it affectionately and pressed it to her heart.

The moment was now approaching when Louis was to assume his position as a Christian prince, and Elizabeth was to receive the reward of her patience and relief from her trials. In 1218, on the Feast of St. Kilian, the Duke, having completed his eighteenth year, received the arms of a knight in the Church of St. George of Eisenach, with several other young lords, the Bishop of Naumburg coming there to bless their swords. There were no foreign princes present; Louis had declared that he would hold his knighthood only from God and his faithful vassals. The following year was devoted in part to a war which he had to wage against Siegfried, Archbishop of Mentz, who, in consequence of certain quarrels with the Duke Hermann, had excommunicated his son. The latter having entered Hesse unexpectedly, ravaged the possessions there of the prelate and his friends, and compelled him to sue for peace. A conference was held at Fulda on the Feast of St. Boniface, in the year 1219; the Landgrave was there formally absolved, and a complete reconciliation was effected. On his return from this first campaign, Louis announced his intentions to marry his betrothed, and at the same timef silenced all the slanders and all

[1] Mirrors of this kind were used in Germany even in recent times. According to Raumer, *Hist. of the Hohenstaufen*, Vol. V, this mirror was mounted in ivory and came from the East.

the perverse counsels of which she had been the victim. No one dared to oppose further a will so decided, and the craftiness of men was powerless to separate any longer two souls whom God had united in His eternal decrees. How admirable, says their historian, to see this happy young man, this chaste spouse, in his marriage, deaf to the counsels of the wicked, uninfluenced by the thirst for gold, knowing that a good wife is that blessed portion promised by the Lord to him who has done good in the world.

The marriage was celebrated in 1220, with great pomp, in the castle of Wartburg. The Duke invited all the counts of Hesse and Thuringia, and a great number of knights and gentlemen to be present. The guests were all lodged at his expense in the city of Eisenach. By common consent the honor of conducting the bride to the church was accorded to the Count Reinhard of Muhlberg and to Lord Varila, who nine years before had gone to Hungary for her, and who were now about to realize the accomplishment, as it were, of the purpose of their journey. She was also accompanied by all the noble women, both wives and daughters, of the country. The chroniclers do not speak of the sentiments with which all this nobility witnessed the triumph of her who had so long been the object of their scorn and persecution. Instead they describe to us in glowing terms the sweet music of the Mass, the luxury of the banquets and the dancing, the splendor of the tournament, which lasted three days, and in which many young knights distinguished themselves. At the conclusion of these three days of feasting, the lords and their ladies departed successively for their castles, and the usual order commenced to reign again in the vast manor of Wartburg. The young husband and wife now found themselves in each other's possession. Louis was twenty years of age, Elizabeth was but thir-

teen; both innocent in heart even more than in years, both united in spirit and in faith more than in flesh, they loved each other in God, we are told, with an incredible love, and that is why the holy angels dwelt near them.

CHAPTER V

The Duke Louis, Dear St. Elizabeth's Husband, is pleasing to God and Men

Erat vir ille simplex et rectus, ac timens Deum, et recedens a malo.
Job I, 1.

The husband whom God in His mercy had designed for His faithful servant, and whom she loved with a tenderness so profound and at the same time so reserved, was certainly worthy of her and of her love. All the historians of Thuringia and of our Saint unite in presenting us with a most attractive picture of him; and with the exception of his glorious namesake, St. Louis of France, the history of his time offers no example of a prince who, at so early an age, possessed in so high a degree all the virtues of a Christian and a sovereign.

The nobility and purity of his soul was manifest to all in his exterior. His manly beauty distinguished him among his contemporaries. The writers all speak in praise of the perfect proportion of his figure, the freshness of his complexion, his long, flaxen hair, and of the serene and benevolent expression of his countenance. Many thought they saw in him a striking resemblance to the portrait which tradition had preserved of the Son of God made man. The charm of his smile was irresistible. His bearing was noble and dignified; his voice remarkably sweet. No one could see him without loving him. What especially distinguished him from his earliest years was a purity of soul and of body, upon which he never permitted the slightest stain to rest. He was as modest and chaste as

a young girl; he was quick to blush, and in his language he observed great prudence. Nor was it only in his early and innocent years that he was able to preserve this treasure of purity; with him it was not the fruit of an early life divested of all danger, or the result of transitory emotions, of resolutions sincere but destined to vanish with the first storm of passion; it was a resolute and fixed will, which became the rule of his whole life; it was an inflexible resistance to the most frequent and dangerous temptations. Left to himself just as he was entering upon the years of adolescence, the ruler at sixteen of one of the richest and most powerful principalities of Germany, surrounded by all the fascination of power and luxury, and of the stirring life of that period; surrounded, especially, by perfidious counsellors, by flatterers eager to see the ruin of his virtue, he never wavered; he never sullied with the slightest blemish the fidelity which he had promised to God, to himself, and to her whom he loved in God.

As illustrating this, I would ask my readers' permission to relate here two events which contemporary writers have recorded circumstantially, and which seem to me of a nature to edify humble souls.

Shortly after the death of his father, one day when he was with his mother, the Duchess Sophia, at the castle of Ebersberg, a certain nobleman was desirous of putting his youthful innocence to the proof. Having found, in the neighboring town of Auerbach, a young girl of remarkable beauty, he brought her to the castle and conducted her to the chamber of the Prince. To do this it was necessary to cross a court in which little Elizabeth was playing just at that time with her companions. At the sight of this stranger, who was being led to the apartments of her betrothed, she began to cry; and when she was asked the cause of her tears, she replied, "Because they wish to take the precious soul of my brother and destroy it." The

young Duke was resting on his bed, during the heat of the day, when he heard a knock at his door; springing, barefooted, from his bed, he went immediately to open it. The young girl entered with the knight, and when they had seated themselves, Louis said to the girl, "Young maiden, what have you come here for?" "I know not why, my Lord," she replied.[1] "I have brought her to you," said the knight, "to do with her according to your pleasure." At these words the pious and prudent Prince called one of his chamberlains and told him to bring three marcs of pure silver. As soon as they were brought he gave them to the young girl, saying to her, "Lower your veil, fair maiden, and take this small gift by way of a blessing, that you may return with joy to your family."

Then taking the unworthy knight one side, he commanded him to conduct the young girl back to her parents, protecting her from all harm. "If the least wrong be done her, I promise you I will have you hung." The narrator says that he concealed the name of the wretched knight, for the sake of avoiding scandal. Elizabeth, seeing the stranger going away so soon, dried her tears, rejoicing and thanking God.

On another occasion, when at Eisenach, he was looking out the window upon a place where dancing was going on; one of his assistants called his attention to the wife of one of the citizens of the place, who was remarkable for her beauty and grace, adding that if she pleased him, he would undertake to render her favorable to his wishes. The Prince turned upon him with great indignation, and said, "Silence! If ever again you dare to profane my ears with

[1] Domicella, ad quid venisti? At illa: Nescio, Domine, ad quid veni. The title of *Domicellus*, *Domicella*, derived from the French, was given to pages and maids of honor in great houses. See Ducange and Seguzius. St. Francis, in his *Opuscules*, says that Jesus Christ on earth had poverty as his *Domicella*.

such language, I will drive you from my court. How dare you propose that I should become the accomplice of a crime that I may any day be called upon to judge and to punish?"[1]

A virtue so rare and so courageous could only be founded on the most active faith, and the practice of all the duties imposed by the Church. He was present every day at the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, and assisted thereat with exemplary devotion. He was a most zealous defender of the rights of the Church and of the monasteries; though he well knew how to distinguish these rights from the personal interests of certain prelates, as we have seen from the war which he carried on against the Archbishop of Mentz. But where it was brutal injustice, or the greediness of his lay vassals which disturbed the peaceful and beneficent life of God's ministers, he mounted his horse at once, and went, lance in hand, to defend the cause of God and his poor people.[2] He seemed to enjoy the society of religious more than any other; and in time of peace his excursions generally led him to the abbey of the Benedictines of Reinhartsbrunn,[3] which he had chosen as his place of burial. His first visit, on his arrival there, was to the hospital for the poor and for pilgrims, which was an essential feature of every monastery. He sought to console the sick and the infirm by his presence, and by kind words, and always left with them, as an alms, some portion of his rich garments, or other small articles. On his return to the castle he endeavored to practice in his own life some of the acts of self-denial of which he had seen examples in the

[1] Theod. III, 5; Rothe, 1711. The latter author fixes the date of this occurrence in the year 1226. Several other occurrences of this nature are recorded by historians.

[2] See Chapter XII.

[3] Six leagues from Eisenach. Theod. II, 6.

religious life. Through a spirit of mortification he never ate food that was salted or spiced; and, in strange contrast with the custom of the German princes of that period, he never drank beer, and wine only when he was unwell.

This simple and naïve fidelity to the strictest duties of a Christian life only serve to render more admirable in him the qualities of a brave knight and a wise and amiable prince. No prince of his time excelled him in courage, or even in physical strength and dexterity in bodily exercise. He displayed this courage on one occasion which the historians of the period have carefully recorded. The Emperor had presented him with a lion. One morning the Duke scarcely dressed, and without arms or defence of any kind, was walking in the courtyard, when he saw the lion, which had escaped from his cage, running towards him, roaring. Without displaying any fear, he stood firm, and as the beast approached shook his fist and spoke to him in a threatening tone, while trusting himself to God. The lion immediately crouched at his feet, tossing his tail. A sentinel who was on the ramparts, attracted by the roaring of the animal, perceived his master's danger and called for help. The lion allowed himself to be chained without resistance, and many recognized, in this dominion exercised over ferocious animals, an evident pledge of celestial favor, merited by the piety of the Prince and the sanctity of young Elizabeth.

To this courage, many other proofs of which will be found in the subsequent pages of this narrative, he joined, in a supreme degree, that noble courtesy which St. Francis of Assisi, his sublime contemporary, called *the sister of Charity*. He bore towards all women a respect full of modesty. He manifested towards every one, and especially towards his inferiors, a benevolence and affability which were never wanting. He loved to give pleasure to others. He never wounded or repelled any

one by his pride or coldness. A sweet and frank gayety, an amiable familiarity, marked all his intimate and domestic relations. His knights and attendants enjoyed his generosity; the counts and lords who came to his court were treated there with the greatest consideration and with all the honors due to their rank.

To these chivalric virtues he added all those of a Christian sovereign. The only ardent passion which all the historians recognize in him was that of justice. He loved it fervently and devotedly; and this love gave him all the severity necessary to punish violaters of his laws. He expelled from his court and deprived of their offices or employment, with no favor, the lords who oppressed their vassals, and even those who were arrogant towards the poor, as well as all who permitted themselves to resort to acts of violence, or who came to him with false or malicious denunciations. Blasphemers, and those who shamelessly uttered impure language in his presence, were at once condemned to wear for a certain time an outward mark of ignominy.[1] Inflexible towards those who violated the law of God, he was indulgent and patient towards those who offended him. When any of his attendants forgot themselves in their manner with him, he would merely say to them, "Dear children, do not do it again, because you afflict my heart." In all his deliberations he exercised a discreet prudence; his military expeditions and his political acts displayed an ability and foresight which it is not easy to reconcile with his extreme youth and the simplicity of his character. He devoted himself zealously and assiduously to the work imposed upon him in the government of his States. His veracity was proof against everything, and his slightest word inspired as much

[1] According to some authors it was the wooden figure of a donkey which schoolboys carried on their backs, as is still done to-day in Poland.

security as the most solemn oath. One could build upon that word as upon a rock. Full of mercy and generosity towards the poor, he manifested an extreme solicitude for all classes of his people. He was as severe upon the counts and the greatest lords of the country, when they were accused of pillage and oppression, as upon the humblest peasant. All who felt that they had been wronged, no matter by whom, had recourse to him with perfect confidence, and never in vain. We shall see him more than once taking the field to avenge the wrongs done to his humblest subjects.

Under such a prince the prosperity, both moral and material, of Thuringia could not but increase; and the chronicles of the country speak with enthusiasm of the happiness which it enjoyed during this too short reign, and of the abundant fruit which was born of the virtuous example of the sovereign. The nobility imitated their chief, and complaint was no longer heard among the vassals of the oppressive and warlike habits to which certain lords had been addicted. The people showed themselves submissive and quiet. Union, peace, and security reigned everywhere. There was but one common sentiment at home, as well as abroad, which extolled and envied the happiness that Thuringia owed to the virtues of the Duke Louis.

In a word, his whole life and character may be summed up in the noble motto which he had chosen for himself in his early years: *Piety, Chastity, Justice.* He justified more than any other the glorious belief of Catholic ages, which recognized a fundamental analogy between chivalry and the priestly character; true knights were then the armed priests of justice and faith, as the priests were the knights of speech and prayer.

CHAPTER VI

The Duke Louis and Dear St. Elizabeth live together before God in the Holy Sacrament of Marriage

> Pars bona mulier bona, in parte timentium
> Deum dabitur viro pro factis bonis.
>
> Ecclus. XXVI, 3.
>
> Vulnerasti cor meum, soror, mea sponsa.
>
> Cant. IV, 9.

A prince who offered so perfect a model of a valiant Christian could receive here on earth no sweeter, better recompense than the love of a saint. We have seen that with Elizabeth there were no ties to bind her to a life in this world save this love, which she associated with such religious thoughts. Louis, on his part, had always cherished the tender fidelity of his early years.

She had, moreover, all that could attract and win a young heart. Pleasing in the sight of God for her piety and humility, she was also pleasing in the eyes of men for every personal charm. The historians who have given us a portrait of her represent her as possessing regular features and perfect beauty. Her whole person left nothing to be desired; her complexion was dark and clear, her hair black, her figure of an elegance and grace unrivalled, her bearing grave and full of nobility and majesty.[1] Her eyes especially seemed radiant with ten-

[1] Nature had been even more liberal to her than fortune. She possessed the most superb and beautiful figure in the world; and

derness and charity and mercy. It is easy to see that in this earthly beauty there was clearly reflected something of the immortal beauty of her soul.

But it was not upon the fleeting sentiments of a purely human admiration and attraction that this young couple had raised the unalterable union of their hearts. It was upon a common Faith, and upon the severe practice of all the virtues which that Faith teaches, and all the duties which it imposes. Despite her extreme youth, and the almost childish vivacity of her love for her husband, Elizabeth never forgot that he was her head, as Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and that she should be submissive to him in all things as the Church is to Jesus Christ. She united therefore to her ardent affection a great respect for him; she responded eagerly to the least sign or word from him; she was scrupulously careful that no action or word of hers, even the most insignificant, should wound or even annoy him.

The yoke, however, which she had taken upon herself was, as the Church wishes it to be, a yoke of love and of peace;[1] for Louis granted her complete liberty in the performance of works of piety and mercy, which alone interested her. He encouraged and even sustained her in these salutary exercises with pious solicitude, restraining her only when her zeal seemed to him to be carrying her too far, and giving her that advice which was dictated always by an affectionate prudence, and received always with respect. Every night the young wife, taking advantage of the real or feigned sleep of her husband, or tearing herself from his caresses, left the marriage-bed, and kneeling by the side thereof, prayed for a long time, thinking of the blessed

there was something in her bearing, so noble, so grand and so majestic, that it was impossible to see her without admiring her. There was not a more beautiful person in the world. — P. Archange, p. 82.

[1] Preface of the Nuptial Mass.

manger, and thanking God that He had vouchsafed to be born at midnight, in the cold and in misery, to save her and the whole human race. Her husband would often awake, and fearing that she was too delicate to give herself up to such penances, would beg her to cease. "Dear sister," he would say to her, "spare yourself and rest a little." Then he would take her hand and hold it till she had returned to bed, or until he himself had fallen asleep with his hand resting in that of his wife; and she would often bathe with fervent tears that hand, which seemed, as it were, to want to keep her on earth. However, he never constrained or obliged her to cease from these works of piety, which were really a source of deep gratification and joy to him. Ysentrude, the most confidential attendant of Elizabeth, narrated to the ecclesiastical judges an occurrence which illustrates Louis' indulgent nature. The Duchess, in order that she might not sleep too late, and at the same time that she might not disturb her husband's sleep, had charged one of her maids of honor to wake her at a certain hour by shaking her foot. It happened on one occasion that Ysentrude made a mistake and shook the Duke's foot. He awoke suddenly, but divining at once the cause of the disturbance, he turned over and went to sleep again without manifesting any sign of impatience.

He saw clearly, says his historian, that she loved God with all her heart, and this thought reassured him; and she on her part trusted in the piety and wisdom of her husband, and concealed from him none of her mortifications, knowing that he would never stand between her and her Saviour. To the frequent demonstrations of mutual tenderness which they gave one another were added sweet exhortations to advance together in the way of perfection, and this holy emulation strengthened and maintained them in the service of God; the ardent love

which united their hearts only served to increase in them the sentiment and the charm of divine love.[1]

The simple and pure character of their affection was illustrated especially in the sweet custom which they always kept up, of calling each other brother and sister, even after their marriage, as if to perpetuate the remembrance of their childhood spent together, and to unite their whole life in one single attachment.

The happiness of being together was for them so indispensable, the chaste affection which drew them to each other was so strong, the union of their souls so intimate, that they could not bear to remain separated, even for the shortest space of time. So when the Duke went from home anywhere, if the journey were not too long, he always took his dear Elizabeth with him, and she was delighted to go, although she often had to travel over rough and dangerous roads, considerable distances, and to brave violent storms. But neither frost, nor snow, nor excessive heat, nor floods could prevent her from going, so anxious was she not to be separated from him who never separated her from God.

It sometimes happened, however, that Louis was obliged, by his duties as sovereign, to undertake distant journeys, to go outside of his own States, where he could not take his wife with him. But these short separations became in themselves the means of strengthening their tenderness for each other and their mutual fidelity. This was the time chosen by evil minded persons to suggest to the young Prince the giving himself up to carnal appetites; but this only afforded him the better opportunity of proving his purity and his love for Elizabeth. One day some

[1] Miro se affectu diligentes, et se invicem ad Dei laudem et servitium dulciter invitantes et confortantes. — Dict. IV Ancill. 2019. Deposition of Ysentrude, reproduced in one of the lessons of the ancient office of the Saint.

of his knights said to him, "My Lord, why do you not do like other princes and lords? You cannot always be with your wife, nor always resist the exigences of your youth." He remained silent at first; but as they persisted in their queries, he replied to them with warmth, "Gentlemen, if you prize my good-will, be careful never again to address such language to me. I have a wife, and it behooves me to keep my faith with her."

On her part Elizabeth, as soon as her husband had gone, threw off her princely robes and clothed herself in the garb of a widow, covering her head with a veil, as widows do. She remained thus during his entire absence, awaiting his return in prayer, vigils, and the most austere mortifications. But the moment her husband's approach was announced, she hastened to attire herself with all the care and all the splendor that her rank required. "It is not," she said to her attendants, "for the sake of any sensual satisfaction, or for vanity's sake, that I attire myself thus, as God knows, but only through Christian charity, that I may give my brother no cause for discontent, or sin perhaps, if anything in me displease him; that he may love only me in our dear Lord, and that God, Who has preserved our union on earth, may keep us united for all eternity."

Then she went out to meet him with all the innocent joy of a child, and while they were together made every effort to render herself pleasing in his eyes and agreeable to his heart. At the table she could not persuade herself to occupy a place far from her husband, and always sat by his side — a thing which even then was quite contrary to the custom observed by ladies of rank. In so doing she not only gratified her wish to be as near as possible to him, but she felt that her presence was a restraint upon the frivolous conversation of the young knights.

In fact nothing could better command the respect of

worldly souls than the sight of so much virtue in two persons so young. United thus by a sacred bond, full of humility and purity before God, full of charity and good-will towards mankind, full of love for each other, a love which drew them both nearer to God, they presented in the sight of heaven and earth the sweetest and most edifying spectacle, — a realization here in this life of that charming picture which the greatest of Catholic poets has given us of a celestial marriage: —

> La lor concordia, e i lor lieti sembienti,
> Amore e maraviglia e dolce sguardo
> Faceano esser cagion de' pensier santi.
>
> Dante, *Paradiso*, XI.

CHAPTER VII

Dear St. Elizabeth's Self-Mortifications

Or a la dame ainsi vescu
Et de sa vie a fait escu
Por l'ame deffendre et couvrir
Et por saint paradix ouvrir.

Rutebeuf, Mss. f. 34.

Such is the picture of our young Princess in the possession of that happiness of early years, those sweet joys of the morning of life, which no later joys can replace, the memory of which no sorrow can efface. In our weak human hearts their absence casts a shadow over the whole of life, and their memory suffices to alleviate the most cruel miseries. And so God most frequently sends His creatures this dew of the early morn that they may be able to endure the burdens and the heat of the day. But Elizabeth, whose interior eyes were fixed upon heaven while embracing this happiness freely and heartily, comprehended the danger thereof; and for this chosen soul it was a sort of trial, in which it was necessary that she should gain a victory.

She felt that the grace which God had bestowed upon her, in uniting her with him whom she loved so tenderly here on earth, required from her a fidelity all the more zealous, and a gratitude all the more earnest, towards her heavenly benefactor. Although her young conscience could not certainly have been very seriously burdened, she nevertheless remembered that before the strict justice

of God the most faithful souls are but useless servants,[1] and that in order to merit eternal salvation one cannot embrace too many sacrifices. From that time she commenced, in the humility of her soul, to treasure up that superabundance of graces and merits which is, according to the sweet and consoling doctrine of the Church, so resplendent a glory for the saints of God, and for the faithful so priceless a treasure and so safe a refuge.

In the first place she strove to overcome the flesh by her vigils. We have seen with what unremitting severity she could mortify herself in this respect, and with what mingled feelings of solicitude and indulgence her pious husband saw her rising from her place by him at night, that she might draw nearer to God. It happened not unfrequently, however, that in spite of her good-will, Elizabeth, overcome by drowsiness, fell asleep on the floor by the side of the bed, her hand still resting in the hand of her husband. Her attendants finding her in this position when they entered her chamber in the morning, would reproach her, asking whether it would not be quite as well for her to sleep in her bed as on the floor. "No," she replied, "if I cannot pray all the time, at least I can practice mortification by separating myself from my dearly loved one. I wish my body to be brought under subjection; thus only can it become the servant of my soul."

When her husband was absent, she watched the entire night with Jesus, the Spouse of her soul. But it was not by penances of this kind alone that the young and innocent Princess afflicted herself. Under her finest garments she always wore, next to her skin, a hair shirt. Every Friday, in commemoration of the bitter passion of our Lord, and every day during Lent, she gave herself the discipline with severity in secret, in order, says one of her historians, "to make some reparation to our Lord, Who

[1] St. Luke xvii, 10.

was scourged"; and immediately afterwards she would make her appearance again before her court, with a serene and joyful countenance. At a later period she would rise during the night even, and leaving her husband's side would go to an adjoining chamber, and there compel her attendants to chastise her rigorously; then, feeling that she had overcome herself and her own weakness, she would return to her husband full of gayety and sweetness. It was thus, says a contemporary poet, that she sought to approach nearer to her God, and to burst the bonds of her prison of flesh, like a valiant soldier of divine love. But she made it her rule not to permit these secret austerities to exert any unfavorable influence upon her daily life, or to render her sad or morose. She did not hesitate to take part in the worldly festivities and reunions in which her position assigned her, as it were, a part; and, we are told by a great and admirable saint, worthy in every respect to judge and to understand her, "she played and danced at times, when she happened to be present at social gatherings, without prejudice to her devotion, which was deeply rooted within her soul. As the rocks on the shores of Lake Rietta grew larger by the constant beating of the waves, so her love of God increased in the midst of the pomps and vanities to which her condition exposed her."[1] She detested every species of exterior exaggeration in works of piety, every affectation of grief, and said of those who assumed a sad and severe expression of face in saying their prayers: "They seem to want to frighten the good God. Why do they not give Him what they have to offer cheerfully and with good heart?"

She neglected no means of offering to God the tribute of her humility and obedience. Her confessor was Conrad of Marburg, of whom I shall have occasion to speak

[1] St. Francis of Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life*, Part III, Chapter XXXIV.

later on. She had, with the approval of her husband, made a vow of obedience to him in everything that did not conflict with marital authority. Conrad, who had protested against the collection of certain taxes, the revenues of which were intended to defray the expenses of the royal table, had forbidden his penitent to eat any food which she was not sure had been provided by her husband's own means, and not from the rents exacted from his poor vassals, which he regarded as being too often the product of unjust extortions, contrary to the will of God. The compassionate heart of the young Duchess eagerly adopted this opinion, and acted upon it with scrupulous care. Sometimes it was the occasion of embarrassment to her, because, as we have seen, she insisted upon sitting near her husband at the table. The good Prince, however, did not at all oppose her wishes; and when three of her maids of honor asked permission to follow the example of their mistress, he granted it at once, adding, "I would gladly do as you do, did I not fear malicious talk and scandal; but with God's help I too will soon change my way of living."

Full of tender respect for the conscience of his wife, he informed her with sweet and affectionate eagerness when there were any dishes which were not proscribed by her rule; as in like manner, when he knew that everything was provided from his own possessions, he urged her to eat. But Elizabeth hardly dared to touch any dish, fearing always lest it might be the fruit of the toil and suffering of the poor. She took care, however, to conceal from the eyes of the world what she was doing for the love of God; and when she was seated at the Duke's table, in the midst of the knights and officers of his court, she had recourse to a thousand little devices to prevent her self-denial from being observed. She pretended to be giving the most assiduous attention to the service, gave frequent

orders to the domestics, addressed herself to each of the guests, and invited them to drink; sometimes she cut up into little pieces the bread or other articles of food that were placed before her, and distributed them here and there, to give them the appearance of being remnants. In this way she often rose hungry and weak from the most abundant table; her maids of honor, the companions of her penance, relate that sometimes she was reduced, for her whole nourishment, to dry bread, or to a few little cakes which she covered with honey. One day, at a grand feast, she could reserve for herself only five very small birds, and these she left almost entirely to her attendants, for their privations gave her much more concern than her own. Another time, when she was on her way to join her husband at the Diet of the Empire, she found nothing that she could conscientiously eat, except a piece of coarse black bread, so hard that she was obliged to soften it by soaking it in hot water; but as it was a fast day, she felt satisfied, and with this one meal she travelled that day sixteen leagues on horseback.

A touching and beautiful tradition shows us how God mitigated for her, even in a material and sensible manner, anything of a harsh and disagreeable nature that might attach to these privations. One day, during the absence of her husband, she was eating all alone her poor repast, which consisted of dry bread and water. The Duke, coming in unexpectedly, wanted, as a mark of affection, to drink out of her glass. To his great surprise he found it contained a liquor which seemed to him to be the best wine in the world. He at once inquired of the cup-bearer where he had got it, and was told by him that the Duchess had been given nothing but water. Louis said nothing more; but, according to the expression, as pious as it was just, of one of the narrators, he had *wit enough* to recognize in what had occurred a mark of divine favor, and a

recompense for the sacrifices which his wife imposed upon herself.

She frequently inspected the larder of the castle with her attendants and informed herself with the greatest care as to the source whence the various articles of food and drink were procured. When she found any allowable food, she would say to her maids, "That is all you can eat"; or when it was some permissible beverage, as wine from her husband's vineyard, she would say, "That is the only thing you can drink." But when she found that there was nothing there which could cause her any uneasiness, she clapped her hands with childish delight, exclaiming, "All is right to-day; we can eat and drink." She might have been at that time fifteen years of age, and she preserved a most youthful spirit and heart, while rendering herself worthy of heaven by virtues which were much beyond her age.

A life so rigorous and so opposed to all the customs of her rank and of her time drew upon the Duchess the disapprobation and the reproaches of all her court; the Duke himself was not spared because of his tolerance for what was regarded as the extravagances of his wife. They both resigned themselves with patience, and in the spirit of charity, to these profane judgments, preferring to please God rather than men.

The young Princess, however, soon found a new field for exercising her zeal and her love of mortification. On a certain grand feast, according to the custom at Wartburg, she went down to Eisenach, clothed in sumptuous garments, covered with jewels, and wearing a ducal crown upon her head, accompanied by her mother-in-law and a numerous suite, and proceeded to one of the churches of the city. It was her habit, whenever she entered a church, to cast her eyes at once upon the crucifix. She did so on this occasion; and seeing the image of her Saviour, naked,

crowned with thorns, and His hands and feet pierced with nails, she felt herself penetrated with compunction, as she had done before in her childhood,[1] and entering within herself she said, "Behold thy God suspended upon a cross, and thou, useless creature, thou art covered with precious garments. His head is crowned with thorns, and thou hast a crown of gold." And at the same moment, overcome by her pious compassion, she fainted and fell to the ground. The frightened assistants lifted her up, carried her to the entrance of the church to give her fresh air, and dashed holy water upon her face. She soon revived; but from that moment she took the resolution to renounce every species of ornament in her dress, except where the obligations of her rank or the wishes of her husband required it. In the testimony of her attendants we find a detailed account of many of the objects which at that time constituted a part of the toilet of a princess, and which she no longer wished to wear. She discarded, for instance, gay colors in her dress and in her head veil, tight fitting and plaited sleeves, which seem to have been much in fashion at that period, silk bands for fastening the hair, and long-trained dresses. When she found it necessary to appear in ceremonious costume, she always wore, under gold and purple, plain woollen clothes and her hair shirt, which she never left off; and in public solemnities she bore herself with the dignity and at the same time with the modesty of a Christian princess. She commended this Christian modesty to the noble ladies who came to visit her, exhorted them earnestly to renounce, at least, in that respect, the vanities of the world, and even sent them patterns of garments which she thought suitable for them. Her efforts were not without good results; many of these ladies, moved by the example of this young woman, scarcely yet a bride, renounced worldly extrava-

[1] See above, p. 147.

gances, and same of them even took the vow of perpetual continence.

O saintly simplicity, purity of the early ages, naïve and innocent tenderness of ancient days, will you never return? Must we believe that you have perished, that you are forever dead? Or, if it be true that centuries in the life of the world are but as years in the life of man, will you not, after so long and so dreary a winter, come again, sweet springtime of faith, to renew the world and regenerate our hearts?

CHAPTER VIII

St. Elizabeth's Great Charity and her Love of Poverty

Da pauperi ut des tibi: da pauperi micam ut accipias totum panem; da tectum, accipe coelum; da res perituras, ut accipias aeternas mensuras. — S. Petrus Chrysologus, *Sermo* 8 *de jejun. et eleem.*

In te mericordia, in te pietate,
In te magnificenza, in te s'aduna
Quantunque in creatura è di bontate.

Dante, *Paradiso*, XXXIII.

Whilst Elizabeth imposed so rigorous a restraint upon her own senses, and treated herself with such unremitting severity, her heart overflowed with charity and mercy towards her unfortunate fellow beings. The tender charity which had always animated her, from her earliest childhood, grew deeper with each day of her life; ere long it was to merit for her that glorious and sweet title under which Christianity still venerates her — *Patroness of the Poor.* Generosity towards the poor was one of the distinctive characteristics of the age in which she lived, notably among princes; but it was noticeable that with her charity did not proceed from the influences of her birth, still less from any desire to merit praise, or a purely human recognition; but rather from a celestial and interior inspiration. From her very infancy she had never been able to bear the sight of a poor person without having her heart pierced, as it were, with grief; and now that her husband had granted her the most complete liberty in all things touching the honor of God and the welfare of her neigh-

bor, she indulged without restraint her natural inclination to console the suffering members of Jesus Christ. This was her constant thought every moment of the day; it was to the poor that she devoted all that superabundance which she refused to the customs of her sex and of her rank; and in spite of the resources which the charity of her husband placed at her disposal, she gave away so quickly all that she had, that she was often compelled to strip herself of her own garments, that she might have wherewith to relieve the distressed.

So generous an abnegation of self could not fail to make an impression upon the heart and the imagination of the people. It is narrated in the ancient chronicles that one Thursday, as the Duchess was going down to the city, richly clad and wearing her crown, she met a crowd of poor people on her way, and distributed among them all the money she had with her; then, when she had given all away, she saw one of them begging alms in a plaintive tone. She grieved at having nothing to give him; but, that he might not be disappointed, she took off one of her gloves, which was richly embroidered and ornamented with gems, and gave it to him. A young knight who was following her, having witnessed what she had done, approached the poor man at once and bought the glove from him, attaching it in the form of a crest to his helmet, as a pledge of divine protection. And he was not mistaken; from that moment he noticed that in all his combats, in every tournament, he invariably overcame his adversary, and was never conquered himself. Some time afterwards he went on the Crusade, where his exploits won for him great renown. On his return to his native country, he declared, on his deathbed, that he attributed all his glory and all his successes to the privilege which he had enjoyed of carrying about always with him a souvenir of dear St. Elizabeth.

But it was not by her gifts alone, or with money, that the young Princess satisfied her love for the poor of Christ; it was much more by her personal devotion, by her tender and patient care, which, in the eyes of God, as well as to those in misfortune, is certainly the greatest and most pleasing charity. She devoted herself to this care with that simplicity and exterior cheerfulness which never left her. When the sick came to invoke her charity, after having given them what she could, she ascertained where they lived, in order that she might go and see them. And then no distance nor difficulty in reaching a place prevented her from going there. She knew that nothing kindles the spirit of charity so much as to see and to search into human misery in its material and actual existence. She made her way to the hovels most remote from her castle and most repulsive for their squalor and foul air; she entered into these homes of the poor with a sort of devotion and at the same time of familiarity; she brought herself whatever she thought necessary for the unfortunate occupants, and consoled them much less by her generous gifts than by her sweet and affectionate words. When she found that they were in debt, and without the means of releasing themselves, she assumed the debts herself, paying them with her own funds. Poor women in confinement were especially the object of her compassion; as often as she could she went and sat by the side of their miserable beds, assisting and encouraging them; she took their newly born into her arms with the love of a mother, covered them with clothes which she herself had made, and often held them at the baptismal font, in order that this spiritual maternity might furnish her an additional motive for loving and caring for them during all their life. When one of these poor creatures died, she came, as soon as she could, to watch with the body, laid it out with her own hands,

often with sheets from her own bed, and assisted at the burial; and people saw with admiration this noble sovereign following with humility and recollection the coffin of the lowliest of her subjects.

When at home she occupied her leisure moments, not in the luxurious recreations of wealth, but, like the valiant woman of the Scriptures, in laborious and useful works; she spun wool with her maids of honor, and then from it made with her own hands clothing for the poor, or for the mendicant religious, who came at that time to establish themselves in her States. She often directed her entire meal to be prepared from vegetables, poorly cooked on purpose, without salt or seasoning of any kind, in order that she might realize by experience how the poor were nourished; and these she eat with great delight.

We have seen how she suffered incessantly from hunger, rather than partake of nourishment procured by the toil, unjustly exacted, of her poor subjects; but her zeal for justice and her tender solicitude for the unfortunate were not limited to these purely personal scruples. When in the discharge of the domestic duties of her house she discovered evidence of any violence, or any wrong done to the poor country people, she went at once and complained of it to her husband, and endeavored to make reparation as far as lay in her power. As if these beautiful virtues were an indefeasible prerogative of the house of Hungary, we find them nearly two centuries later in a young and illustrious sovereign, like Elizabeth the daughter of a king of Hungary, Hedwiges, elected Queen of Poland at the age of thirteen; who by her marriage with Jagellon, effected a union of Poland and Lithuania, and who died at twenty-eight in the odor of sanctity (1399), after having been renowned as the most beautiful and the most courageous princess of her time. Worthy to have been of the race of Elizabeth by the intense com-

passion of her heart, she left in the annals of her country one of the most exquisite utterances which ever escaped from the soul of a Christian. Some poor countrymen had come to her in tears to complain that the king's servants had stolen all their cattle. She hastened to her husband and obtained their immediate restoration; after which she said, "The cattle have been restored to them, but who will restore their tears?"

Elizabeth loved to carry herself to the poor, without its being known, not only money, but food and other objects which she intended for them. Thus laden she made her way, over steep and unfrequented paths, from her castle to the city and to the cottages in the adjoining valleys. One day as she was going down, accompanied by one of her favorite attendants, following a very rough little road, which is still pointed out,[1] carrying, in the skirts of her cloak, bread, meat, eggs, and other articles of food, which she intended to distribute among the poor, she suddenly found herself face to face with her husband, who was returning from the chase. Astonished at seeing her thus bending under the weight of her burden, he said to her, "Let me see what you are carrying"; and at the same moment he pulled open the folds of her cloak which, quite alarmed, she hugged to her breast. But there was nothing there save red and white roses, the most beautiful that he had ever seen in his life. He was all the more surprised from the fact that it was not the season for flowers. Perceiving Elizabeth's agitation, he wished to reassure her by his caresses, but stopped suddenly as he beheld a luminous figure appearing upon her head in the form of a crucifix. He then told her to continue on her way, giving himself no further anxiety concerning her, and went up himself to Wartburg, meditating

[1] It is still called, as it was in Elizabeth's time, by the very expressive name of *Kniebrechen*, Knee-breaker.

thoughtfully upon what God was accomplishing in her, and carrying with him one of the miraculous roses, which he kept all his life. Upon the very spot where this meeting occurred, by the side of an old tree, which soon afterwards was cut down, he erected a column surmounted by a cross, to perpetuate forever the memory of the one which he had seen suspended over the head of his wife.[1]

Among all the unfortunate beings who attracted her compassion, those who occupied the largest place in her heart were the lepers, whom the special and mysterious character of their misfortune rendered, during the Middle Ages, the object of a solicitude in which affection was mingled with dread.[2] Elizabeth, like many illustrious saints and princes of her time, took satisfaction in overcoming this latter sentiment, and in disregarding all the precautions which exteriorly separated these beings, marked by the hand of God, from Christian society. Whenever she saw any of them, she went to meet them, as if there were no contagion to fear, sat by their side, spoke tender and consoling words to them, exhorting them to patience and to confidence in God, and did not leave them till she had generously bestowed her alms upon them. "You should suffer this martyrdom cheer-

[1] Vita Rhyt. Hermann of Fritzlar, the manuscript of the Franciscans, and Pelbartus of Temeswar in his sermon XCVI, report this miracle as occurring in her early childhood. It is the most celebrated and the most popular of the miracles of our Saint. She has often been represented by Catholic painters and sculptors with roses in her cloak. Roses are still cultivated in great quantities around the church at Marburg, as well as at Wartburg. The people of these two places, although Protestants, have affectionately cherished this legend. I heard it from a peasant in the vicinity of Marburg, June 29, 1834, with the incident of the rose taken and preserved by the Landgrave, which I had not found in any author. The same miracle is attributed to St. Elizabeth of Portugal, the grandniece of our Saint, and to St. Rose of Viterba.

[2] See further, on the details of this subject, Chapter XXV.

fully," she said to them; "you ought not to let it grieve or anger you. I am certain that if you accept with resignation this punishment which God sends you in this life, you will be safe and free from eternal punishment. You may be sure it will be a source of great merit for you." Having one day met one of these unfortunate creatures, who was suffering also from a disease of the head, and whose appearance was repulsive to the last degree, she made him come secretly to a retired spot in her orchard, and there she herself cut off his horrible hair, and washed and dressed his head, which she held upon her knees. Her maids of honor having surprised her in this strange occupation, she smiled without saying anything.

Once, on Holy Thursday, she gathered together a great number of lepers, washed their feet and hands, and then, prostrating herself before them, humbly kissed their wounds and sores.

At another time, the Landgrave having gone to spend a few days at his castle at Naumburg, which was in the centre of his northern possessions, bordering on Saxony, Elizabeth remained at Wartburg and employed the time of her husband's absence in caring, with increased zeal, for the poor and the sick, in washing them herself, and clothing them with garments which she had made for them, in spite of the disapprobation which was openly expressed by the Duchess Dowager Sophia, who, since the death of her husband, had remained with her son. But the young Duchess paid little attention to the complaints of her mother-in-law. Among these invalids there was a poor little leper, named Helias, or Heli, whose condition was so deplorable that no one was willing any longer to care for him. Elizabeth alone, seeing him abandoned by every one, felt herself obliged to do more for him than for any of the others. She took him, bathed him herself, applied a healing ointment, and then put him into her

own and her husband's bed. Now it so happened that the Duke returned to the castle while Elizabeth was thus engaged. His mother ran at once to meet him, and the moment he put his foot to the ground she said to him, "My dear son, come with me; I want to show you a fine piece of work of your Elizabeth's that will surprise you." "What do you mean by that?" said the Duke. "Only come and be your own witness," she replied; "you will see some one whom she loves far better than she does you." Taking him by the hand, she led him to his chamber and to his bedside. "Now look," she said, "your wife puts lepers in your own bed, and I cannot prevent her from doing it; she wants, as you see, to give you the leprosy." As he listened to these words the Duke could not resist a certain feeling of irritation, and roughly pulled up the covering of his bed. But at the same moment, according to the beautiful expression of the historian, the Almighty opened the eyes of his soul, and instead of the leper, he beheld the figure of Jesus Christ crucified extended upon his bed. At this sight he stood stupified, as did his mother, and burst into a flood of tears, unable at first to utter a word. Then recovering himself, he saw his wife, who had very quietly followed him that she might calm his anger against the leper. "Elizabeth, my dear sister," he said at once, "I beg you will often give my bed up to such guests; I shall always be grateful to you for doing so; do not let any one hinder you in the practice of your virtues." Then falling on his knees, he said this prayer to God: "Lord, have pity on me, a poor sinner. I am not worthy to behold all these wonders, as I know but too well; help me to become a man according to Thy heart and Thy will."

Elizabeth profited by the profound impression which this scene had made upon the Duke to obtain his permission to build a hospital on the side of the rocky

eminence at the summit of which stands the castle of Wartburg, upon the site since occupied by a Franciscan convent. Here she maintained, from that time on, twenty-eight invalid or infirm poor persons who were too feeble to climb up as far as the castle. She went every day to visit them, carrying food and drink to them herself.

Living thus with the poor and for them, it is not surprising that God inspired her with that holy love of poverty which has distinguished souls richest in His graces. Whilst Francis of Assisi, a man of the people, was opening to the world a new gate, as it were, to the sanctuary, through which souls eager for self-denial and sacrifice were pressing onward, God raised up in the midst of the German chivalry this daughter of a king, who, at the age of fifteen, felt the love of evangelic poverty burning in her heart, and who confounded the pride and worldliness of her peers by her profound and sovereign contempt for all earthly riches. He seemed thus to mark out for her the place which she was so soon to assume, in the worship of the Church and in the love of Christian people, by the side of the Seraph of Assisi. In the very flower of her youth and beauty she had succeeded in destroying in her heart every vestige of earthly glory. "She who possessed sovereign glory," remarks an ancient writer, "courted the state of poverty, in order that the world might have no part in her, and that she might be poor as Jesus Christ had been."

She could not help sharing with her dearly loved husband all her secret and holy thoughts, and all the aspirations of her youthful imagination towards a life more simple and at the same time more in conformity with evangelical perfection. One night, as they were lying side by side awake, she said to him, "My Lord, if it will not annoy you, I will tell you of a thought I have as to the kind of life we might lead in order to serve God."

"Tell me, sweet friend, what are your thoughts upon that subject?" "I wish," she said, "that we had but a single carucate of land, which would furnish us with enough to live upon, and about two hundred sheep; then you could cultivate the soil, drive the horses, and suffer these hardships for the love of God; while I would take care of the sheep and shear them." The Landgrave laughed heartily as he replied to her, "Indeed my dear sister, if we had so much land and so many sheep, it seems to me we should hardly be poor, and a good many people would think that we were still too rich."

But charmed with the sweet simplicity of his wife, he repeated this little conversation, a few days afterwards, to his friend the Archbishop Theodore of Treves; and it was from that prelate that the historian obtained it who records the incident.

At other times it was with her attendants, who were also her friends, that she talked of the joys of poverty; and often in her familiar intercourse with them she sought, at least figuratively, to realize her pious desires. Throwing off her royal garments, she would wrap herself in a miserable gray cloak, such as was worn by poor and wretched people, cover her head with a ragged veil, and march before her companions in the character of a poor woman, pretending to beg for bread; and then, as if admonished by a celestial inspiration of the life which God had in store for her, she uttered these prophetic words: "This is the way I shall go about when I am poor and in misery for the love of God."

"O my God!" exclaimed St. Francis of Sales, in narrating this incident to his beloved Philothea, "how poor this princess was in her riches, and how rich in her poverty!"[1]

I frankly confess that nothing in the life of this Saint, which I have studied with so much delight, seems to me

[1] *Introduction to a Devout Life*, Part III, Chapter XV.

more beautiful, or more worthy of admiration and emulation, than this childlike simplicity which may cause some lips to smile with disdain. To my mind, this natural yielding to all her impressions, her smiles, her frequent tears, her girlish joys and anxieties, the innocent amusements of a soul which rested in the bosom of her Heavenly Father, mingled with sacrifices so painful, with thoughts so grave, with such fervent piety, with charity so active, so devoted, and so ardent, present the sweetest and most powerful charm. Especially in an age like ours, when all the flowers have withered ere the fruit is ripe, when simplicity is dead in the hearts of men, in private as well as in social and public life, a Christian cannot study without emotion, and without an inward yearning, the development and unfolding of the soul of this Elizabeth, whose short life was but a prolonged and celestial childhood, a perpetual act of obedience to the words of our Divine Lord, when, taking a little child and placing him in the midst of His disciples, He said to them: "Amen I say unto you, unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." [1]

[1] Amen dico vobis, nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum coelorum. — S. Matt. xviii, 3.

CHAPTER IX

The Great Devotion and Humility of Dear St. Elizabeth

Mittet radicem deorsum et faciet fructum sursum.
IV Reg. XIX, 30.

Assez se fit dou siècle l'estrange,
A Dieu servir veut son cuer mettre,
Car si comme temoigne la lettre
Vertus planta dedans son cuer . . .
Tous vices de sa vie osta:
De Dieu sest (sait): qui tel hoste a
Ne peut ameir Dieu par amors.
Escole fu de bones mors,
Essample fu de penitence
Et droit miraouers d'innocence.
Rutebeuf, Mss.

It was impossible for Elizabeth to have practised the love of her neighbor with such wonderful devotion without the love of God having inundated and taken possession of her heart. To have loved her fellow creatures as much and more than herself, she must indeed have loved God above all things. And so we see her each day making greater progress in that sublime science; each day humility, which had been the earliest companion of her childhood, grew stronger in her soul and filled that holy abode; for it found there no opposition, according to the expression of one of her poetic biographers. Each day, aided by this divine friend, she learned the better to overcome whatever of worldliness remained in her heart; so that, in spite of her extreme youth, in spite of the duties of her state and

the distractions of her position, she had attained a degree of repose and confidence in God which the greatest saints might have envied.

To arrive at that state, and to maintain it, she had had no more efficacious and constant assistance than the faithful adherence to the commandments of the Church, and the frequentation of the sacraments of that holy Mother, so inexhaustible in the benefits which she offers to all her children. She frequently approached holy communion, though always with fear and reverence. Elizabeth comprehended, with all the intelligence of faith, the ineffable price of these treasures. She assisted at divine services with a respect mingled with fear and love, and with intense earnestness. The moment she heard the bell ring, announcing the hour for Mass, she flew, as it were, to church, and always endeavored to get there in advance of her attendants. As soon as she had arrived, she made privately several genuflections, accompanied with fervent prayers, as so many secret acts of confidence offered to her Heavenly Father.

During Mass she endeavored by exterior acts of humility to testify the loving gratitude with which she was inspired by the sacrifice, constantly renewed, of the innocent and supreme Victim. Obliged, out of regard for the presence of her husband, and in order not to scandalize the faithful, to dress according to her rank, she manifested the humility of her heart by the modesty and reserve of her bearing; as also in removing, in presence of the altar, such ornaments as she could conveniently take off and put on, as for instance her ducal crown, her necklaces, her bracelets, her rings, and her gloves. She did this especially during the reading of the Gospel, at the moment of consecration, and at the communion. It happened one day,[1] that during the canon of the Mass, while she was

[1] In 1224, according to Rothe.

praying with fervor, her hands joined modestly and concealed beneath her cloak, and her veil raised so that she might fix her eyes upon the Sacred Host, a heavenly light surrounded her. The priest at the altar, a man of most saintly life and reputation, at the moment of consecration saw the face of the Duchess shining with a splendor so great that he was completely dazzled by it; and up to the time of the communion he found himself surrounded by the rays which shone forth from around her, as though he had been in the bright sunlight. Filled with surprise, he gave glory to God for having manifested by a visible and miraculous light the interior light of this holy soul, and related afterwards what he had seen.

She observed with the utmost care the precepts of the Church concerning the festivals. She consecrated the holy season of Lent by the usual fast, although her age dispensed her from keeping it, as well as by more frequent prayers and alms-deeds. But no words could express the fervor, the love, and the pious veneration with which she celebrated those holy days upon which the Church recalls to the faithful, by such touching and expressive ceremonies, the sorrowful and ineffable mystery of our Redemption. On Holy Thursday, imitating the King of kings, Who on that day, rising from the table,[1] laid aside His garments, the daughter of the King of Hungary, removing all that could recall worldly pomp, clothed herself in the ordinary dress of poor mendicants, and went to visit the churches, having on her feet a sort of buskin, which seems to have been worn only by the poorest classes. The same day she humbly washed the feet of twelve poor persons, sometimes of lepers,[2] and gave each of them twelve pieces of silver, a woollen garment, and a loaf of white bread.

She spent the entire night between Holy Thursday and

[1] John xiii, 4. [2] See page 183.

Good Friday in prayer and meditation upon the Passion of our Lord. On the morning of the day upon which the divine sacrifice was consummated, she said to her attendants, "This is a day of humiliation for all; I wish none of you to pay me the least mark of respect." Clothed in the same costume that she had worn on the previous day, and conforming in every respect with the custom of the poor women of the country, she put in her dress some little bundles of coarse linen, a small quantity of incense, and some very small tapers; then, barefooted, in the midst of the crowd, she visited all the churches, and kneeling before each altar, she deposited a bundle of linen, some of the incense, and a taper; after which she prostrated herself humbly, and then passed on to the next altar. When she had thus made the round of a church, she went outside and distributed there liberal alms to the poor; but as she was not recognized, she was jostled about unmercifully in the crowd, like any other woman of the people.

Some persons of her court reproached her for making such mean offerings to the Church on this solemn occasion, she, who as princess and sovereign, ought to give an example of munificence; but the celestial instinct of her heart told her that such a day was better observed by acts of humility than by any other virtue. She did violence to the excessive generosity of her nature, in order that she might the more completely confound herself with the lowly and the humble, and offer to God that sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, which He has promised never to despise.

On Rogation Days, which at that time were celebrated by worldly rejoicings, and especially by a great display of dress, the young Duchess always joined the procession clothed in a coarse woollen garment and barefooted. During the sermons of the preachers, she always took her

place among the poor mendicants, and in this way followed in all humility, across the fields, the relics of the Saints and the Cross of our Saviour. For, says one of her contemporaries, all her glory was in the Cross and the Passion of Christ; the world was crucified to her, and she unto the world.

And so it was that God, Who has called Himself the jealous God, could not suffer the heart of His faithful servant to be engrossed, even for a moment, by a purely human thought or affection, however legitimate might be the object thereof. A remarkable incident, related by the Chaplain Berthold, and repeated by all the historians, shows us to what extent Elizabeth and her husband carried these holy and delicate scruples, which are as the perfume exhaled from the souls of the elect. On a certain occasion they both had themselves bled at the same time, and according to the custom of those days, the Duke had gathered together the knights of the surrounding country to rejoice with them, and to feast during several days.[1] On one of these days, as they were all assisting at a solemn Mass in the Church of St. George of Eisenach, the Duchess, forgetting the sanctity of the Holy Sacrifice, fixed her eyes and thoughts upon her dearly loved husband, who was near her, and gazed at him for a long time, allowing herself to be carried away with admiration of that beauty and that amiability which made him so dear to all. But when she recovered her thoughts, at the moment of consecration, the

[1] Being bled was, during the Middle Ages, an important and solemn affair. When the operation was successful, thanks were returned therefor to God, and friends were invited to a feast. Princes and noblemen made it the occasion of great rejoicing. Among young persons who were betrothed it was observed by a beautiful custom. The young man went to the house of her whom he loved and asked her for good blood. His betrothed kissed and blessed the wound. The blessed Henry Suso asked the blessed Virgin for this good blood. See his life, ed. Diepenbrock, p. 130.

divine Spouse of her soul revealed to her how much this purely human preoccupation had offended Him; for, when the priest elevated the consecrated host for the adoration of the people, she beheld in his hands the crucified Saviour with His wounds all bleeding. Filled with consternation at this vision, she recognized her fault at once, and sank down before the altar with her face upon the floor, bathed in tears, to ask pardon of God. At the conclusion of the mass, the Landgrave, accustomed, no doubt, to seeing her wrapt in her meditations, went out with all his court, while she remained thus prostrated alone until dinner time. The banquet prepared for the numerous guests being ready, and no one daring to disturb the Duchess at her prayers, the Duke himself came for her, and said very gently, "Dear sister, why do you not come to the table; why do you keep us waiting so long?" At the sound of his voice she raised her head and regarded him without saying anything; and he, seeing her eyes as red as blood, from the abundance and violence of her tears, said to her with a troubled manner, "Dear sister, why have you wept so long and so bitterly?" And kneeling down by her side, and having listened to her explanation, he began to weep and pray with her. After some time he rose up and said to Elizabeth, "Have confidence in God; I will help you to do penance, and to become still better than you are." But as he saw that she was too much overcome with sadness to be able to appear in the midst of the court, he dried his own eyes, and went to rejoin his guests, while the Duchess continued weeping for her fault.

This young and pious princess had indeed received from heaven the *gift of tears;* [1] those sweet and refreshing tears which reveal in the inmost recesses of the soul the presence of an inexhaustible treasure of graces and consola-

[1] Da mihi gratiam lacrymarum. — S. August., *Medit.*, passim.

tion from on high. The companions of her daily life tell us that her tears, however abundant they were, in no way marred the beauty or serenity of her countenance. This gift, however, was not peculiar to her; the age in which she lived, Catholic people everywhere, in those happy days, possessed it, together with their ardent and simple faith. They recognized its precious virtue, those fervent generations who honored with such touching devotion the divine tear which Jesus shed over the tomb of his friend.[1] There were tears at the bottom of all the poetry and all the piety of the people of the Middle Ages. This *blood of the soul*, to use the words of St. Augustine, this *water of the heart*, as it is called in our ancient romances, flowed in torrents from their eyes; for simple and pious souls it was in some sort a formula of prayer, an inward, and at the same time, an expressive act of worship, a tender and silent offering, in which they participated in all the sorrows and all the merits of Jesus Christ and His saints, and in all the acts of worship of the Church. Like blessed Dominic of Paradise, with their tears they washed the stains from their souls; like St. Odila, they redeemed the sins of those whom they cherished in this world;[2] gathered up by the angels who bore them to the feet of the Father of All Mercy,

[1] There is still seen at Vendôme, in the beautiful church of the Trinity, the altar at which was venerated the *Holy Tear;* that is to say, one of those which Jesus shed over the tomb of Lazarus (*et lacrymatus est Jesus*, John xi, 35), with this inscription: Ad bustum amici Christus olim flens dedit testem hanc amorisque et doloris lacrymam. The illustrious Mabillon published a special treatise defending the authenticity of this holy relic, which Thiers contested.

[2] She redeemed the soul of her father by weeping during five days and five nights, so that she was made blind thereby. For that reason she is the patroness of those having any affliction of the eyes. There is still shown on Mount St. Odila, in Alsace, the Chapel of Tears (Zaehren-Capelle), where she made this sacrifice; and a fountain, to which pilgrims come from afar in search of the waters as a sovereign remedy for diseases of the eye.

they were counted by Him as a precious gift of repentance and holy love.[1]

And it was not weak women alone, nor alone ignorant people, who felt the sweetness and the power of tears. It is only necessary to open at hazard a history of those centuries to see on every page how princes, kings, knights, and whole armies gave vent to their emotions in sincere and involuntary tears. All these men of iron, all these brave and invincible soldiers, carried in their breast a heart as tender and simple as that of a child. They had not yet learned to crush the natural innocence of their feelings, or to be ashamed of them. They had not yet dried up and chilled the source of natural, pure, and strong emotions, of that divine dew which enriches and embellishes life. Who does not remember the sobs and the immortal tears of Godfrey and the first Crusaders at the sight of that tomb of Christ, which they had conquered after such marvellous exploits and such severe trials? Later on, Richard Cœur de Lion wept bitterly at the sight of Jerusalem, which he was unable to save;[2] and the confessor of St. Louis relates of his penitent, that "when these words of the litany were said: Merciful Lord God, we beseech Thee to give us a fountain of tears,[3] the holy king said devoutly: 'O Lord God! I dare not ask a fountain of tears; I but ask that Thou wouldst give me little drops of tears to bedew the sterility of my heart.' . . . And he acknowledged privately to his confessor that our Lord always gave him tears in his prayers; which, when

[1] A poor woman wept one day in church for her sins; the bishop who was at the altar saw a dove come and gather up her tears and bear them away to heaven. — Grimm, Vol. III, p. 40.

[2] Joinville, p. 116, ed. 1761. See also the admirable scene of the Crusaders and the Venetians, in 1204, narrated by Villehardouin.

[3] In the ancient litanies, of the ninth century, we find the following verse: *Ut compunctionam cordis et fontem lacrymarum nobis dones, te rogamus, etc.*

he felt them gently stealing down his cheeks, seemed sweet and delicious, not only to his heart but also to his taste."[1]

[1] *The Confessor*, p. 324, ap. Michelet, *Hist. of France*. The Franciscan Breviary, in the Office of St. Louis, also praises his assiduity in tears: *Lacrymarum assiduitas*.

CHAPTER X

How St. Elizabeth became known to the Glorious St. Francis; his Affectionate Regard for her; Master Conrad of Marburg chosen as her Director

De paupertatis horreo
Sanctus Franciscus satiat
Turbam Christi famelicam,
In via ne deficiat;
Iter pandit ad gloriam,
Et vitae viam ampliat.
Pro paupertatis copia
Regnat dives in patria,
Reges sibi substituens,
Quos hic ditat inopia.

Anthem of the Franciscan Breviary.

From what has been thus far related of the life and character of Elizabeth, we may readily comprehend the relationship which existed between her soul and that of the glorious mendicant of Christ who was then filling Italy with the light of his wonderful power. God did not wish this interior alliance to remain unfruitful and unknown; on the contrary, it was destined to become a fruitful source of consolation for His faithful servant, and of blessings for the whole of dear Germany. A remarkable analogy already existed between their exterior lives. The same year, 1207, that had witnessed the birth of Elizabeth in the midst of sovereign grandeur in Hungary had also witnessed the regeneration in Christ of St. Francis. As she, the daughter of a powerful king and the grand-

daughter of Charlemagne, came into the world surrounded by all the splendor of royalty, he, the son of the merchant Bernardon, renounced his poor inheritance, his family, and his honor, for the love of God; and beaten, imprisoned by his father, delivered from confinement by the love of his mother, covered with mud and hooted at by his fellow citizens, he stripped himself of his last garment, that he might go forth alone and naked to the conquest of the world. Elizabeth did not need this second birth; from the beginning she was prepared for heaven, and from her very infancy her heart had offered a fertile and pure field for that seed of strength and life which the hand of Francis was to scatter over the Christian world, and of which God reserved for her the privilege of being one of the first and most illustrious depositaries.

It is not within my province to relate here the wonderful history of the triumphs of St. Francis in Italy from the time that he commenced preaching; I must needs confine myself to the facts which bear directly upon the life of St. Elizabeth. Within a few years the commotion aroused by the words of the new apostle among torpid and lukewarm souls became so general, the revolution operated in all the social and private relations of life was so violent, that it became necessary for him to adopt some method for regulating and moderating the power which God permitted him to exercise. At every step he met with a multitude of men who were ready to abandon their wives and children to consecrate themselves with him to poverty and to the preaching of the Gospel, and women who manifested their readiness to renounce their duties as wives and mothers to become inmates of the monastery in which Clara, his rival and his sister, presided over the austerities of the poor Clares. Placed in the painful alternative of stifling the salutary germs which were developing in their hearts, or of inducing a danger-

ous revolt against bonds consecrated by God Himself, he resorted to a middle course, which heaven blessed, as it did all his other works. He promised this multitude of faithful souls, so eager to obey him, a special rule of life, by which Christians engaged in domestic life might become associated with his religious by a community of prayer, of good works, and of penance, without sundering those bonds which God Himself has consecrated. At first he gave this rule of life orally to a number of the faithful of both sexes, who hastened to put it in practice, especially at Florence and in the neighboring cities. They congratulated themselves daily upon having found the means, even outside the walls of the monastery, of renouncing the dangerous joys and excesses of the world. Francis, seeing the fervor and the number of the members of this association constantly increasing, gave them the name of *Penitents of the Third Order*, as forming the third branch of his family, which already embraced the Friars Minor, of whom he was the immediate head, and the religious of St. Clara; and in 1221 he wrote and published the rule which he had prescribed for them. According to its principal provisions it was necessary, in order to be admitted to the order, that the husband should obtain the consent of his wife to do so; it was further necessary that the applicant should have repaired all wrongs of whatever nature he might have committed, and be publicly reconciled with all his enemies. Whilst not abandoning their family or their social position, they were required to dress plainly and unpretentiously, and were not allowed to bear arms except in defence of the country or of the Church.[1] They could take no part in festivities, dancing, or any other profane amusements; in addition to the abstinence and fast prescribed by the

[1] They might be dispensed from the observance of these two articles when the duties of their position required it.

Church, they were required to abstain from meat on Monday and Wednesday, and to fast from the Feast of St. Martin until Christmas, and on every Wednesday and Friday in the year; to assist at Mass every day; to receive holy communion on the three great feasts of Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas; to recite every day some special prayers; and to visit the brothers and sisters of the order in their sickness, and to attend their obsequies. This rule, as may be seen, merely established a sort of association or pious confraternity, and in no sense a monastic order. It was not until later that the Third Order, by adopting the use of solemn vows, took on the latter character, which it still preserves at the present time in the countries where it exists.

The immense and rapid growth of the Order of St. Francis is one of the most remarkable, as well as one of the best established facts of this period, and we may believe that the Church was especially indebted for its progress to the association of the Third Order. A countless number of Christians of both sexes daily became affiliated therewith; Italy, France, and Germany were successively invaded by this new army. It was an element which had to be taken into account in the affairs of the world, for the enemies of the Church soon perceived the powerful obstacles which they would have to encounter in an organization which embraced the faithful of every age and of every rank and profession, the soldier as well as the merchant, the priest as well as the jurist, the prince as well as the peasant; and in which the obligation of a severe and exact compliance with the duties of religion would necessarily strengthen the bonds of affection and obedience which united them to the immortal Spouse of Christ, while leaving them in the midst of society and the world to develop there freely that devotion and love which had been newly rekindled

in their hearts. The Emperor Frederick II was heard to complain publicly that he found in the Third Order an impediment to the execution of his projects against the Holy See; and his chancellor, Pietro delle Vigne, states in his letters that all Christianity seemed to have entered therein, and that owing to this institution and the progress it had made, the power of heaven had become here on earth more formidable and more aggressive than that of the world.

It was in 1221, the same year in which St. Francis published the rule of the Third Order, that his religious established themselves permanently in Germany. They certainly could not have found anywhere more sympathy and encouragement than they met with from the young and pious Duchess of Thuringia. She soon gave them every mark of zealous devotion and all the support in her power. She commenced by building in the very heart of her capital, at Eisenach, a Franciscan convent and church, immediately upon their introduction into Germany. She then chose as her confessor Brother Rodinger, one of the first Germans who had embraced the seraphic rule, and a religious distinguished for his zeal, who cherished a sincere attachment for her throughout his entire life. In consequence of these new relations, all that she heard related concerning St. Francis himself inflamed her young heart with an ardent affection for him, and a sort of irresistible impulse urged her to walk in the footsteps of this most illustrious example of all the virtues which she most esteemed. She chose him from that time as her patron and spiritual father. Having learned from the newcomers of the existence of the Third Order in Italy, and the other countries where the family of St. Francis had already spread, she was impressed with the advantages which this affiliation offered to a fervent Christian. She could see in it a sort of special consecration given to the

mortifications and pious practices which of her own accord she had imposed upon herself; she therefore humbly asked her husband's permission to be admitted to the order, and having obtained it without difficulty, she hastened to contract this first bond of union with the Saint who was soon to see her coming to reign by his side in heaven. She was the first in Germany to associate herself with the Third Order; she observed the rule with scrupulous fidelity; and we may well believe that the example of a princess so exalted by her rank and so renowned for her piety could not have been without influence upon the rapid growth of this institution.

Francis was soon informed of the precious conquest which his missionaries had made in the person of Elizabeth. He learned at the same time of her affiliation with his Order, of the attachment which she bore him, and of the sweet virtues by which she was edifying and blessing Thuringia. He was filled with gratitude and admiration, and often spoke of her to Cardinal Hugolin, the protector of his Order, a nephew of Innocent III, and afterwards Pope himself under the name of Gregory IX. The cardinal, who was destined later on to afford his protection to Elizabeth on earth, and to consecrate her glory in heaven, already entertained an affectionate regard for her; and this sentiment was only increased by the sympathy which he found the Duchess bore for this apostle, whose principal support he was, as well as his intimate and tender friend. He could therefore but strengthen Francis in his affectionate sentiments towards her. The exemplary humility of which this princess, still so young, was a model, her austere and fervent piety, her love of poverty, often formed the subject of their familiar conversations. One day the cardinal recommended the Saint to send the Duchess a pledge of his affection and remembrance; and at the same time he drew from his shoulders the poor old

cloak which covered him, bidding him to send it at once to his daughter in Germany, the humble Elizabeth, as a tribute due to the humility and poverty which she professed, and at the same time as a testimonial of his recognition of the services which she had already rendered the order. "I want," said he, "that, since she is full of your spirit, you should leave her a heritage like to that which Elias left to his disciple Eliseus." The Saint obeyed his friend, and sent to her whom he might so justly call his daughter this modest gift, accompanied by a letter, in which he rejoiced with her for all the graces which God had conferred upon her and for the good usage she had made of them.

It is easy to conceive the gratitude with which Elizabeth received this gift, so precious in her eyes; she proved it by the value which she always attached to its possession. She always wore it when offering her prayers to obtain any special grace from our Lord; and when later she renounced, without any reservation whatsoever, the possession of anything of her own, she found means to preserve this dear cloak of her poor father to the time of her death. She bequeathed it then, as her most precious jewel, to a friend. It was afterwards preserved with the greatest care, as a relic doubly sanctified, by the Teutonic Knights at Weissenfels, in the diocese of Spire; and Brother Berthold, a celebrated preacher of that period, related to the judges in the process of Elizabeth, that he had often seen it and touched it with veneration, as the glorious banner of that poverty which had conquered the world and all its pomps in so many hearts.

It was under the shadow of this banner that Elizabeth was to gather, in the secrecy of her soul, the strength necessary to obtain later on the brilliant victory over the world and over her own heart, which God reserved for her; united henceforth by an intimate and filial bond with

the seraphic man, she was to make still greater progress in that straight and thorny path which leads to eternal life, and which she was to traverse in so few years.

She was scarcely seventeen years of age when she lost her Franciscan confessor, Father Rodinger, who had guided her first steps in the path of St. Francis.

It was necessary to choose some one to fill his place, and the Duke, whom Elizabeth had consulted in her perplexity, and who was troubled by the fact that she did not seem to him to be sufficiently instructed in the Holy Scriptures and in the science of religion, wrote to the Pope, and asked him to appoint a wise and enlightened director for his wife. The Sovereign Pontiff replied that he knew no more pious or more learned a priest than Master Conrad of Marburg, who had studied at Paris, and who at that time exercised the functions of Apostolic Commissary in Germany. In fact, Master Conrad was then held in the highest esteem among the clergy and the faithful. He shone in Germany, say his contemporaries, like a brilliant star. With great learning he united morals of an exemplary purity and a constant practice of evangelical poverty. He had renounced not only all the temporal possessions to which his noble birth entitled him, but likewise every ecclesiastical dignity and benefice; for which reason many historians have placed him in one of the mendicant orders which were spreading themselves at that time in the Christian world; but it is more probable that he always remained a secular priest. His exterior was simple, modest, and even austere; his dress strictly clerical; his eloquence exerted a powerful influence over souls. He travelled throughout the whole of Germany on the back of a little mule. Wherever he went, an immense crowd of priests and laymen followed him, to receive from his lips the bread of divine doctrine. He inspired all who listened to him with love or fear,

according as he spoke to fervent Christians or to communities infested with heresy. The great Innocent III had confided to him the functions of Commissary of the Holy Office in Germany, with the special mission of combating the threatening progress of the heresies of the Vaudois, the Waldenses, and others of like character who had made their way into the countries beyond the Rhine, and menaced the Church there with the same evils that they had inflicted upon Southern France. He was at the same time charged with the duty of preaching the Crusade, and succeeded more than once in arousing the lukewarmness of the German people in behalf of these religious expeditions, with a zeal and a constancy worthy of Innocent himself. The two successors of this pontiff, Honorius III and Gregory IX, continued to intrust these duties to him, and he proved himself worthy of all their confidence by the perseverance, the zeal, and the indomitable courage which distinguished his career. During his twenty years devoted to this work, he never shrank before any obstacle or opposition, however formidable it may have been; neither princes nor bishops even, escaped his severe justice, when they appeared to him to merit it, any more than poor laymen; and to this absolute impartiality may be attributed the great popularity which he acquired in the discharge of his difficult duties. He was, says one of his contemporaries, the formidable denouncer of all vices, the terror of all tyrants, and the indefatigable persecutor of heretics. He ended, as we shall see, by becoming the victim of his own severity; but the violent death which was inflicted upon him by those whom he had pursued did not procure for him the supreme honors accorded by the Holy See to St. Peter Parentice and to St. Peter of Verona, who died as he did, about the same time, martyrs of the Faith.

Conrad, who was probably known to the Duke Louis

before having been specially recommended to him by the Pope, soon inspired him with so much confidence and respect that, by a solemn act, sealed by himself and his brothers, he invested this simple priest with the authority to confer upon the most worthy individuals all the ecclesiastical benefices over which he exercised the rights of advowson or collation. This was the best response that he could make to the exhortations which Conrad had addressed to him upon the scrupulous solicitude which he ought to observe in the exercise of a right so important for the salvation of souls. "You commit a greater offence," the zealous preacher had said to him, "when you confer a church or an altar (that is to say, the benefice attached to officiating at an altar) upon an ignorant or unworthy priest, than if in battle you were to kill fifty or sixty men with your own hands." Louis then besought him to undertake the duties of spiritual director of his wife, and Conrad consented to do so as much out of regard for the piety of the Prince as on account of the recommendation of the Sovereign Pontiff.

When the young Duchess, who, as we have said, was but seventeen years of age, learned that a man so renowned for his sanctity and learning was to devote his special care to her, she was filled with humility and gratitude. She prepared herself for what she regarded as a celestial favor by fasting and increased mortification. She often said, "Poor sinful woman that I am, I am not worthy that this holy man should give me his care. My God, how much I thank Thee for Thy graces!" When she was informed that Conrad was coming, she went out to meet him and threw herself at his feet, saying, "My spiritual father, deign to receive me as your daughter in God. I am unworthy of you; but I recommend myself to you for the love of my brother." Conrad, seeing in this humility, so precocious and so profound, of a young and

powerful princess a presage of the future glory of her soul, could not refrain from exclaiming, "O Lord Jesus, what wonders Thou dost work in souls that are Thine!" and he repeatedly expressed the joy which this meeting gave him. He became her confessor from that time forth, and devoted himself with his accustomed zeal to the care of this precious plant, whose growth for heaven he was charged to watch over. Soon the instinct of the spiritual life developed with so much intensity in Elizabeth's soul, her aspirations towards the perfection of a Christian life became so frequent and so earnest, that Conrad found her one day, as he himself wrote to the Pope, bathed in tears and lamenting bitterly that her parents had destined her to the married state, and that she had been unable, in passing through this mortal life, to preserve the flower of her virginity to offer it to God.

In spite, however, of these regrets, inspired by her fervor, as remarks one of her historians, the love which she bore her husband was none the less tender or ardent. On his part, far from impeding her progress in the path upon which Conrad was leading her, he co-operated therein as much as he could, and he did not hesitate to permit her to take a vow of perfect obedience to all the directions of her confessor which should not be contrary to the rights and just authority of marriage. She added thereto the vow of perpetual continence in case she were to become a widow. She took these two vows in the year 1225, at the age of eighteen, with a certain solemnity, her hands placed between those of her confessor, in the church of the religious of St. Catherine, at Eisenach, for which she had a special affection. She observed this vow of obedience with the strictest fidelity, and with that unreserved humility which always distinguished her, offering to God such sacrifices as were most painful to her. We have seen already the great care and scrupulous exactness

which she exercised in complying with the prohibition that Conrad had made her regarding the use of articles of food on the Duke's table, the origin of which seemed to her to be fraught with injustice to the poor people.[1] True to the inflexible austerity of his character, and recognizing in her no more than a simple Christian, he did not modify by any consideration the voluntary yoke which she had imposed upon herself, and from that time treated her with a severity which must have increased her merit before God.

One day he sent for her to come and hear him preach; but she being detained at the moment by her sister-in-law, the Margravine of Misnia, who had come to pay her a visit, did not respond to his invitation. Annoyed by her disobedience, and by her having thus lost the indulgence of twenty days, which the Pope had granted to all who should be present at his sermons, he sent word to her that henceforth he should decline to have the care of her soul. But the following morning she hastened to him, and begged him most earnestly to reconsider this cruel resolution, and to pardon her fault. He refused harshly at first; finally she prostrated herself at his feet, and after having besought him for a long time in this position, obtained at length his favor, on condition that she should perform a severe penance, which was imposed upon her, as well as upon her maids of honor, to whom Conrad imputed a share in her disobedience, and who received a harsh punishment.

[1] See p. 172.

CHAPTER XI

The Graces which were manifested by our Lord in the Person of Dear St. Elizabeth

Sancti tui, Domine, florebunt, et sicut odor balsami erunt ante te.
Rom. Brev., *Ant. of the Common of Apostles and Martyrs.*

Having thus presented the general features of Elizabeth's life during the whole time of her union with the Duke Louis, it is necessary that I should go back to the early days of her married life, to relate some of the occurrences which varied the uniformity of that life, and which at the same time were touching proofs of the favor of God towards His humble servant.

In the year 1221, shortly after the nuptials of the Duchess, King Andrew, her father, who some years previously had joined the Crusaders, and was then returning from a glorious expedition in Egypt,[1] learned from a reliable source of the marriage of his daughter; that she had really become the Duchess of Thuringia.

The better to assure himself of the fact, he charged four noblemen of his court, who were going on a pilgrimage to Aix-la-Chapelle,[2] to return by the way of Thuringia, and

[1] It had lasted three years (1218–1221), during which the Crusaders had taken Damietta, Heliopolis, etc.

[2] Since the reign of King St. Stephen, the Hungarians had been accustomed to go in great numbers on the pilgrimage to Aix-la-Chapelle to venerate the great relics which Charlemagne had deposited there. In 1374, or, according to others, in 1382, King Louis of Hungary went there himself with a stately retinue, and built a chapel called the Hungarians', which he richly endowed in honor, as we are told in the

to bring him full particulars regarding his daughter, her method of life, the conditions of her court and of the country in which she lived; and at the same time to invite her to come to Hungary, accompanied by her husband, to give joy to the declining days of her father, for he longed to see them both.

The noblemen, after having accomplished their pilgrimage at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Aix-la-Chapelle, in returning took the route by way of Thuringia as requested, instead of by Franconia, and arrived one day at Wartburg. The Landgrave received them most cordially. But he bethought himself at once that his wife had no clothes in which suitably to appear before his guests; that she had already cut up her wedding garments, and had them made over in shapes more agreeable to her modesty, and that there was not time then to order new ones. Full of anxiety on this account, he went to her room, and finding her there, said, "My dear sister, some friends have just arrived from your father's court; I am sure they have come to see what sort of a life you are leading with me, and to ascertain whether you really have the retinue of a duchess. How are you going to make your appearance before them? You are so much taken up with your poor that you do not think of yourself; you never want to wear anything but these miserable clothes, which are a mortification to us both. What a reproach it will be to me when they return to Hungary and say that I permit you to want for clothes, and that they found you in so pitiable a condition! And

inscription, of the Blessed Virgin, St. Ann, St. Stephen, St. Emmeric, St. Ladislas, St. Elizabeth, and other saints of Hungary. The pilgrims of that nation enjoyed very important privileges up to the time of the revolution. As is known, even at the present time this holy pilgrimage is made by large numbers at the time of the exposition of the great relics, which occurs every seven years. In 1839 fifty-four thousand pilgrims went there. In 1496 there were a hundred and forty-two thousand in a single day.

you see there is not time now for me to order others made which would be suitable to your rank and mine." But she replied sweetly to him, "My dear husband and brother, don't let that give you any anxiety, for I am resolved never to permit my glory to be dependent upon my clothes. I shall be able to excuse myself to these noble gentlemen, and I will exert myself to treat them with so much affability and gayety that I shall be quite as pleasing to them as though I wore the most beautiful garments." She had recourse at once to prayer, and asked God to render her agreeable to her friends; then, having dressed herself as well as she could, she went to meet her husband and the envoys from her father.

Not only did she charm them by the cordiality of her welcome, by the sweetness and amenity of her manners, and by her beauty, which shone with a peculiar brilliancy and freshness,[1] but, to the great surprise of the Duke, and the great admiration of the strangers, she appeared to them clothed in garments of magnificent silk, and wrapt in a mantle of blue velvet studded all over with the most precious pearls. The Hungarians declared that the Queen of France could not have been as richly dressed.[2] After a brilliant feast, the Duke earnestly besought his guests to remain longer with him; but as they excused themselves on the ground that their companions on their pilgrimage would not wait for them, he went down with them to the city, defrayed all the expenses which their retinue had been put to there, and accompanied them a certain distance on their way. Then returning in all haste to his

[1] Et fu tant bele et colorée
Comme rose est la matinée.

Moine Robert, Mss.

[2] In all the monuments of the Middle Ages it is invariably the Queen of France who is represented as the model of beauty and magnificence.

wife, he inquired how she had managed to clothe herself thus. Elizabeth replied with a sweet and affectionate smile, "You see what our Lord can do when it so pleases Him."

Several authors give a different version of this miracle.[1] They say that as the report of Elizabeth's virtues was spread everywhere, a powerful lord (according to some it was the Emperor himself) came to travel through the States of the Landgrave. The latter went to meet him, and desired to entertain him in his castle. But the stranger declined to accept the invitation unless the Duke would promise at the same time to permit him to see the Duchess and talk with her. Louis willingly consented to this, and conducted the nobleman to Wartburg. After a grand feast, he reminded the Duke of his promise, and the latter sent word to Elizabeth, who was in her oratory, to come and speak with him. But she had, according to her custom, given away to the poor all her clothing and articles of adornment, so that she secretly sent word to her husband, humbly begging him to excuse her this time, because she had no costume suitable to appear in before his guests. But the nobleman still insisting, Louis rose from the table and went himself to urge her to come, reproaching her gently for not having obeyed him at first. She replied that she would follow him immediately. "My good sweet husband," she added, "I will go and do as you wish me to, for it would be great folly on my part to contradict you in anything. I am yours, my lord; I am given to you, and I have always loyally obeyed you, and in future I shall in like manner do whatsoever you wish me to, for, after Christ, you are my lord."

When he had left her, she threw herself on her knees

[1] These are: the Franciscan manuscript of Heidelberg, that of the Bollandists at Brussels, the poem of Brother Robert in the Royal Library, the Passional, etc.

and said, "Lord Jesus Christ, most clement and faithful Father, sweet comforter of the poor, and of all those who are in trouble, faithful friend and helper of all who confide in Thee, come to the assistance of Thy poor servant who has stripped herself of all her garments for the love of Thee." Immediately an angel appeared and said to her, "O noble spouse of the King of Heaven, behold what God, Whom thou hast loved so much, sends thee from heaven; thou shalt clothe thyself with this garment, and crown thyself with this crown, as a sign of thy eternal glory." She thanked God, and putting on the garment and the crown, presented herself in the banquet hall. Seeing her so richly dressed and so beautiful, all the guests were startled, for her face was resplendent like that of an angel. She seated herself in their midst, and greeted them with cordiality and gayety; her conversation was sweeter than honey, so that they found more nourishment in her words than in all the dishes of the feast. The nobleman, delighted at having seen Elizabeth, whom he desired so much to know, took his departure. The Duke accompanied him a certain distance, then returned in all haste to his wife, and asked where she had got these garments. She could not conceal the fact from him. Then the pious Prince exclaimed, "Indeed God is good to us! It is a pleasure to serve so good a Master, Who comes so faithfully to the help of His own. I, too, wish to be always more and more His servant." The following year (1222) in accordance with the invitation which the envoys of King Andrew had given them in his name, the Duke Louis escorted Elizabeth to Hungary. He confided the care of his States, during his absence, to the Counts of Muhlberg, Gleichen, and others, and took with him as his escort the Counts of Stolberg, Schwartzburg, Besenburg, and Beichlingen and a great number of noblemen, among whom was Rudolph of Varila, the son of Lord Gaultier, who eleven

years before had gone to Hungary in quest of Elizabeth. He had succeeded his father, not only in the duties of grand cup-bearer, but especially in his faithful devotion to the Duchess. The latter had as her companions on this journey the wives of the counts that I have just named, and a great number of noble ladies. King Andrew received his daughter and son-in-law with great joy. They spent a considerable time at his court, and assisted at many feasts and tournaments given in their honor, in which the Thuringian knights especially distinguished themselves. They assisted also at the nuptials of the King, who married, as his second wife, Yolande of Courtenay, daughter of the Emperor Francis of Constantinople. Andrew on this occasion loaded them with presents, especially of precious stones of great value. All the knights and ladies of their suite, and even the least of the servants, received rich gifts from the King. He had a carriage of peculiar shape constructed expressly to hold all the gold and the gems which his daughter was to take with her. When the hour of their departure had arrived, the King led them out on a grand hunt, for Duke Louis was a great huntsman. Then they separated, and the Duke, greatly pleased, returned to Thuringia with his wife, his retinue of attendants, and his newly acquired riches.

Some time after his return, the Duke married his sister the beautiful Agnes, the companion of Elizabeth's childhood, to Henry, Duke of Austria;[1] and, whether to honor this occasion, or to celebrate his return to his States, he gave a grand feast at Wartburg, to which he invited all the counts and principal noblemen of his duchy, with their wives. As they were about to be seated at the table, it was noticed that the Duchess was not present. She had

[1] Agnes was the grandmother of the young Frederick, Duke of Austrian Baden, who died on the scaffold with Conradin of Swabia.

not come, according to custom, to take water and wash her hands with her husband's guests. They all declared that they did not wish to commence till the Duchess had arrived. In the meantime, Elizabeth, in returning from the church to the banquet hall, had seen lying on the steps of the stairs a poor unfortunate man, almost naked, who seemed so sick and feeble that she wondered how he could have gotten up from the city to the castle in his condition. As soon as he saw her, he begged her, in the name of Christ, to give him some assistance. She replied that she had not time to do so; moreover, that she had nothing left to give him, but that she would send him something to eat from the feast. The poor man, however, continued to cry out in a loud voice, beseeching her to give him something right away; till finally the Duchess, moved with compassion, took off the elegant silk mantle which she wore and threw it to him. The beggar took it, and rolling it up hurried away. Elizabeth thus left without a mantle over her dress, which was quite contrary to the custom of that period, did not dare to go into the banquet hall, but went to her room, where she recommended herself to God. The seneschal, who had witnessed all that had taken place, went at once and related the facts to the Duke, in the presence and hearing of all the guests, saying to him, "Tell us, my lord, whether you think what our dear lady, the Duchess, has just done, is reasonable. While so many noble gentlemen are waiting here for her, she is engaged in clothing the poor, and she has just given away her mantle to a beggar." The good Landgrave smiled, and said, "I will go and see what the trouble is; she will join us presently." Leaving his guests for a moment, he went up to her apartments, and said to her, "My dearly loved sister, are you not coming to dine with us? We should have been seated a long time had we not been waiting for you." "I am quite ready to do

as you wish me to, my dear brother," she replied. "But where is the mantle which you wore when you went to church?" inquired the Duke. "I have given it away, my good brother," she said; "but if it be all the same to you, I will come as I am." At these words, one of her chamber maids said to her: "Madam, on my way here I saw your mantle hanging on its nail in the closet; I will go and get it for you." And she returned immediately with the same mantle that the beggar had just carried away. Elizabeth threw herself on her knees for a moment to thank God, then rose and accompanied her husband to the dinner table. While all the noble company, and especially the Duke of Austria and his young wife, were enjoying themselves, the Landgrave Louis was serious and recollected, for he was thinking within himself of all the numerous graces which God was conferring upon his Elizabeth. "Who can doubt," adds one of her pious and naïve historians, "that an angel from heaven brought back the mantle, and it was Christ Himself who had taken the form of a poor naked beggar, to prove His beloved Elizabeth, as at another time He did the glorious St. Martin?" Thus He had adorned His own sweet flower Elizabeth, this lily of purity and faith, with a beauty such as Solomon could not have had in all his glory.[1]

But God reserved for this noble and pious couple a gift yet sweeter and dearer to their hearts. The most precious blessing of wedded life could not be refused by the Almighty to the husband and wife who in the sight of all were the model of a Christian union. He gave to his faithful servant the grace of maternity, as a reward here on earth for the purity of her soul and body.

In the year 1223, Elizabeth, at the age of sixteen, be-

[1] This mantle was preserved until the fifteenth century by the Franciscans at Eisenach, who had made from it an ornament used in the Mass.

came a mother for the first time. As the time of her confinement approached, she was removed, in accordance with her own wishes, to the castle of Creuzburg, on the Werra, a few leagues from Eisenach. She was much more quiet there than at Wartburg, and found herself also nearer her husband, who had gone to hold the States of Hesse at Marburg. Many noble ladies came there to assist her, and to watch with her night and day. On the 28th of March, three days after the Feast of the Annunciation of of our Lady, she gave birth to her first child. The Duke had been unable to leave Marburg in time to be with her, and it was there that the news was brought to him that a son had been born to him. Louis, in the height of his joy, richly rewarded the messenger, and started at once to rejoin the young mother. He arrived in season to be present at the baptism of the child, and gave him the name of Hermann, in memory of his own father. To testify his gratification at the birth of this son, he had the wooden bridge, which leads to the city of Creuzburg, rebuilt in stone. This bridge still exists, with a beautiful Gothic chapel consecrated to St. Liborius, Bishop of Le Mans. A year after (1224), while she was at Wartburg, where the Duke had wished her to remain, in order that he might always be near her, the Duchess gave birth to a daughter, who was named Sophia, after the Duchess-mother. This princess afterwards married the Duke of Brabant, and was the ancestor of the reigning house of Hesse.

Elizabeth had two other daughters; the second was also called Sophia, and the third, born after her father's death, Gertrude. Both were consecrated to God from their birth, and took the veil as spouses of our Lord.

Faithful in all things to that humility and modesty which she had prescribed for herself, Elizabeth scrupulously preserved these virtues in the midst of the joys of

maternity, as she had done in the midst of sovereign magnificence. After each of her confinements, when the time for her churching had come, instead of making it the occasion of feasting and wordly rejoicing, as was the general custom, she took her newly born in her arms, left the castle secretly, clothed in a simple woollen dress [1] and barefooted, and directed her steps to a distant church, that of St. Catherine, situated outside of the walls of Eisenach. The descent was long and difficult; the road covered with sharp stones, which tore and drew the blood from her delicate feet. She carried her child all the way herself, as the Immaculate Virgin had done; and on her arrival at the church, placed it on the altar, with a taper and a lamb, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, I offer Thee and Thy dear mother Mary this precious fruit of my womb. Behold, my Lord and my God! I present him to Thee with all my heart, just as Thou hast given him to me, Thou who art the sovereign and most merciful Father of both mother and child. The only prayer I make to Thee this day, and the only grace I presume to ask of Thee is, that Thou wilt be pleased to receive this little child, all bathed in my tears, among the number of Thy servants and friends, and to bestow upon him Thy holy blessing."

[1] On her return, she always gave the dress which she had worn to some poor mother who had recently been confined like herself. — Theod., John Lefèvre, etc.

CHAPTER XII

How the Good Duke Louis protected his Poor People

Liberabit pauperem a potente, pauperem cui non erat adjutor.
Ps. LXXI, 12.

Indutus est justitia ut lorica, et galea salutis in capite ejus: indutus est vestimentis ultionis, et opertus est quasi pallio zeli . . .
Quia ego Dominus diligens judicium et odio habens rapinam.
Is. LIX, 17; LXI, 8.

Everything in the life of this holy couple shows the profound sympathy which united them, and how worthy they were of each other. We have seen how the Duchess exerted all the energy and ingenious tenderness of her soul in relieving the distress of the unfortunate, whenever they came within her reach. It remains for me to show how the Duke devoted his courage and his military talents to the defence of the interests of the people whom God had confided to him. That innate love of justice, to which I have already referred as his distinguishing virtue, gave him so profound a regard for the rights of his people, and so generous a sympathy for them when they had suffered injury, that these motives alone led him to undertake distant and costly expeditions, the cause of which greatly astonished his neighbors and his vassals.

Thus, in 1225, the Duke learned that some of his subjects who traded with Poland and other Slavonic countries, had been robbed and plundered near the castle of Lubantsk, or Lubitz, in Poland. He demanded reparation from the Duke of Poland for these unfortunate people, and

it was refused. He then summoned a considerable army of Hessians, Thuringians, and Franconians, including the Knights of Osterland, to meet on the Feast of the Dispersion of the Apostles.[1] He conducted them secretly as far as the banks of the Elbe, without announcing their destination. On their arrival at Leipsic, his army was reinforced by the Saxon knights of his palatinate, and many armed men from Misnea, for he was the guardian of the young Margrave of that province, his nephew. Then for the first time he announced that he intended going as far as Poland, to beseige the castle of Lubantsk and revenge the injury done his poor subjects. There was a general astonishment at this among the knights, who could not comprehend how he should want to go so far for the sake of a little matter concerning traders only. As he would not allow himself to be shaken in his resolutions by any of their remonstrances, many of them were disposed to withdraw; but pride, and perhaps their fear of his severity, restrained them. They were obliged to follow him to Poland, which he entered at the head of his army, preceded by an advance guard of three thousand five hundred picked men, who arrived before Lubantsk three days ahead of him. They burnt the city and invested the castle while waiting for him. The Duke of Poland was greatly surprised on learning that the Landgrave of Thuringia had come from so far to invade his country, at the head of so powerful an army, and sent to him offers of pecuniary satisfaction. Louis replied that he should have done that when he wrote to him on the subject in a friendly tone, and before he had started on his campaign;

[1] This feast, which is found in the ancient calendars as early as the ninth century, was observed on the 15th of July. Its object was to commemorate the departure of the Apostles on their different missions after the ascension of our Lord and the descent of the Holy Ghost. It is still observed in Germany and in the dioceses of Lorraine.

that he did not propose to take so long a tramp for nothing. Having arrived before Lubantsk, he pressed the siege vigorously. The Polish Prince then sent a bishop to make other and more forcible representations to him. The bishop told him not to forget that the Poles also were famous warriors, and that if he did not withdraw immediately the Duke of Poland would come with his whole army on the following Monday, and would exterminate all these Germans. To which the Landgrave replied that he would be delighted to make the acquaintance of the Duke, and that he would remain eight days after the Monday fixed, in order that he might get some little knowledge as to what sort of people these Poles were. But neither the Duke nor the Poles made their appearance. After a few assaults the castle surrendered, and Louis, after having destroyed it, returned home, leaving throughout all of Eastern Germany a most favorable impression of his justice, his courage, and his love for his poor people.

Sometime after, the Duke undertook a campaign for reasons which seemed still more insignificant; but the incident gives so just an idea of the kindness and affability of his character, as well as of the manners of that period, that I shall relate it in detail. Two or three years before, at the annual fair of Eisenach, as the Duke was on his way down to the city and was amusing himself by looking at the booths and stalls, he saw a poor pedler, who had only a very small stock, and who was selling thimbles, needles, spoons, lead images, and little knick-knacks for women. The Duke asked him if he could make a living out of this small business. "Well, my lord," replied the pedler, "I am ashamed to beg, and I am not strong enough to work by the day; but if I could only go about in safety from city to city, I might, with God's help, gain a living with this little assortment, and even manage to double my stock by the end of the year."

The kind Duke, moved with compassion, said to him, "Very well, I will give you my safe conduct for a year; you will have neither taxes nor tolls to pay anywhere within my domain. What do you consider your pack is worth?" "Twenty shillings," replied the pedler. "Give him ten shillings," said the Duke to his treasurer, who accompanied him, "and have a safe conduct made out for him under my seal."

Then turning again to the pedler he said, "I want to have an equal share with you in the profits of your business. Promise me that you will be a faithful partner, and I on my part will protect you from all harm." The poor pedler was overcome with joy, and started off on his course with confidence and success. On the new-year he returned to find his noble associate at Wartburg, and showed his whole pack, which had become much larger. The Landgrave selected therefrom a few little objects, which he gave to his servants. On each first day of the year the pedler returned to Wartburg to share with the Prince the accessions made to his little stock, which soon became so large that he could no longer carry it on his back. So he bought an ass, made two packs of his merchandise, and began making longer and more profitable trips.

Towards the end of the year it happened that the pedler had been to Venice, where he had bought quite a stock of foreign and valuable articles, a good many rings, ladies' bracelets and breastpins, crowns and diadems in precious stones, ivory cups and mirrors, knives, adder's-tongues, coral beads, etc. As he was making his way to Thuringia, in order to reach Wartburg for the new-year, according to his custom, he arrived at Wurtzburg in Franconia, where he displayed his merchandise for sale. Certain Franconians who came to look at his stock found there several little fancy articles which pleased them

greatly, and which they would have liked to present to their wives, or their friends, but without paying for them. Accordingly, they had the pedler watched, so as to know when he should leave, placed themselves in ambuscade at a certain distance from the city, and seizing him as he passed, took from him his ass and all his merchandise. It was to no purpose that he showed them the safe conduct of the Landgrave of Thuringia; they laughed at it, and even tried to secure him and drag him along with them. It was with difficulty that he escaped from their hands. Making his way, in great distress, to Eisenach, and going to his lord and partner, he related to him his misfortune. "My dear fellow," said the good Prince, smiling, "do not be so much troubled about the loss of our merchandise; have a little patience, and leave to me the task of recovering it." He at once called together the counts, the knights, and the squires of the surrounding country, and even the peasantry, placed himself at their head, marched into Franconia at once, and devastated the whole country as far as the gates of Wurtzburg, inquiring everywhere for the ass that had been stolen. At the news of this invasion the Prince-Bishop of Wurtzburg sent to ask him what he meant by such conduct. To which the Duke replied that he was hunting for a certain ass belonging to him, which the bishop's subjects had stolen from him. The bishop at once caused the restitution of the ass and his baggage, and the good Duke returned home triumphantly, to the great admiration of the poor people, whose defence he undertook in this way.

But while he was thus engaged, he received from the Emperor Frederick II an invitation to come and meet him in Italy. He started at once, and crossed the Alps before the end of winter. He made with the Emperor the whole campaign against the Bolognese and the other insurgent cities, and was present at the Diet of Cremona,

on Easter 1226. The Emperor was so gratified by his courage and devotion, that he granted him the investiture of the margravate of Misnia, in case his sister Judith, the widow of the last margrave, were to die without direct heirs; and at the same time that of all the country which he might conquer in Prussia, whither he entertained the project of going, to carry the Christian faith.[1]

[1] This project was carried out a few years later by the Teutonic Order, of which Conrad, a brother of the Duke Louis, was one of the principal leaders. We may therefore believe that the plans of Elizabeth's husband were not without some influence upon this event, one of the most important of the Middle Ages by reason of its results.

CHAPTER XIII

Thuringia devastated by a Great Scarcity; Dear St. Elizabeth practises all the Works of Mercy

Esurivi, et dedistis mihi manducare: sitivi, et dedistis mihi bibere: hospes eram, et collegistis me: nudus, et cooperuistis me: infirmus, et visitastis me: in carcere eram et venistis ad me.

S. Matt. XXV, 35, 36.

Scarcely had the Duke taken his departure, to go and range himself under the imperial banner, when a terrible famine appeared throughout Germany, and was especially destructive in Thuringia. The famished people were reduced to the direst extremities. The poor were seen wandering in the fields, in the woods, and on the roads, gathering the roots and wild fruits which ordinarily served as the nourishment of animals. Dead horses and asses, and the most unclean beasts were devoured. Yet in spite of the deplorable expedients, a great number of these unfortunate people died of hunger, and the roads were strewn with their dead bodies.

At the sight of so much misery the heart of Elizabeth was moved with intense sympathy. From that moment her one thought, her sole occupation night and day, was the relief of her unfortunate subjects. The castle of Wartburg, where her husband had left her, became the centre of a charity that knew no bounds, from which an inexhaustible generosity was poured out unceasingly upon the surrounding people. She commenced by distributing among the needy throughout the duchy all the ready money there was in the ducal treasury, which amounted

to what was for that time the enormous sum of sixty-four thousand florins of gold, which came from the recent sale of certain domains. Then she opened all of her husband's graneries, and despite the opposition of the officers of her household, she had the entire contents distributed, without reserve, to the poor people. It amounted to so much that, according to contemporary accounts, to purchase the grain alone which she gave away to the poor, it would have been necessary to pledge the two largest castles of the duchy and several cities. She recognized, however, the necessity of uniting prudence with this unbounded charity. Instead of giving out the grain in large quantities, which might have been used up improvidently, she had it distributed daily, so that each poor person should receive sufficient for his wants. To relieve them of any expense, she had as much bread baked as the ovens of the castle would contain, and distributed herself to the needy while it was still hot. Nine hundred poor persons came thus every day, to ask for food, and went away loaded with her favors.

But there was a still larger number whom weakness, ill-health, or infirmities prevented from climbing up the mountain on which the ducal residence was situated; and it was especially for these that Elizabeth redoubled her solicitude and compassion during this distressing crisis. She carried herself to the foot of the mountain, to certain persons whom she had chosen from among the most infirm, what remained from her own table and that of her attendants; and she hardly dared touch her own food for fear of diminishing the portion of the poor. The sick who required especial care she placed in the hospital, having twenty-eight beds — of which I have already spoken — which she had established on the side of the mountain on the road to the castle; as soon as one of the inmates died, his bed was at once taken by another who

was admitted. She afterwards established two new hospitals in the city of Eisenach, one under the invocation of the Holy Ghost, near the gate St. George, for poor women, the other under that of St. Ann, for the sick in general. The last is still in existence. Twice a day, morning and evening, without fail, the young Duchess went down and up the long rugged mountain path which led from Wartburg to these hospitals, despite the fatigue which it caused her to visit these poor people, and to bring to them articles both of necessity and comfort. Having entered these abodes of suffering, she went from bed to bed asking the sick what they wanted, and rendering them the most repulsive services, with a zeal and tenderness which the love of God and His special grace could alone have inspired. She nursed with her own hands those who were afflicted with the most disgusting diseases, made their beds herself, lifted them and carried them on her back or in her arms to other beds, and wiped their face, their nose, and mouth with the veil she wore on her head, and all this with a gayety and amenity of manner which nothing could disturb. She had a natural repugnance to bad air, and it was generally impossible for her to endure it; nevertheless she remained in the noxious atmosphere of the sick rooms during the most intense heat of summer, without indicating the least repugnance, although her attendants were overcome by it, and openly expressed their discontent.

"Whilst all her attendants were horrified," says a good religious of the seventeenth century, speaking of this subject, "she, this princess of heaven, smilingly said, 'When I shall stand before the judgment seat of God, and He shall ask me whether I have served the poor, I shall say to Him: Yes, my Lord, to such an extent that my maids and servants were often made sick thereby.'"

In one of these hospitals she had founded an asylum

exclusively for poor sick children who had been deserted, or were orphans. They were the especial objects of her tenderness, and the recipients of the most gentle and loving care. Their little hearts soon realized what a sweet mother God had vouchsafed to give them in their misery. Whenever she appeared in their midst, like little birds that hide beneath the wings of their mother, they all ran to meet her, and clung to her garments, crying, *mamma, mamma.* She made them sit down around her, distributed little presents among them, and examined into the condition of each; she displayed her affection and sympathy especially towards those whose disease was the most loathsome, taking them upon her knees and loading them with her caresses. She was not only the benefactress of these unfortunate people, but likewise their friend and confidant. A poor sick man one day having told her secretly that his conscience was burdened with the remembrance of a debt that he had not paid, she quieted him by promising that she would assume it in his place; and she redeemed her promise at once.

The time which she could spare from her care of the hospitals she spent in going about in the neighborhood of Wartburg, distributing food and relief among the poor who were unable to climb up as far as the castle, and visiting the most inferior cottages to render services of a menial kind, and wholly foreign to her rank. One day as she entered the cabin of a poor sick man who was all alone, he asked her plaintively for some milk, saying that he had n't the strength to go and milk his cow. The humble Princess immediately went to the stable and set about the task of milking the poor man's cow; but the animal, unaccustomed to the touch of such delicate hands, would not permit her to carry out her beneficent intention.

She endeavored to be present at the deathbed of the dying, to aid them in their final struggle; she received

their last breath with a kiss of fraternal charity, and prayed God with fervor, and during hours at a time, to sanctify the last moments of these unfortunate ones, and to receive them into His glory. She was more than ever faithful to her custom of attending the obsequies of the poor, and notwithstanding the increase of mortality, she was always seen accompanying the remains to the grave, after having laid them out with her own hands in linen which she had woven herself for this purpose, or which she took from among her own clothes. She cut up and made use in this way of a large white veil which she usually wore. She would not consent to the use of new and expensive material for the shrouds of the rich, insisting that old material should be used instead, and the value of the new given to the poor.

Nor did poor prisoners escape her solicitude. She visited them wherever she knew them to be; purchased the release of as many as she could, with money, of those who were imprisoned for debt; dressed and applied ointment to the wounds which their chains had made, and kneeling by their side, prayed with them to God that He would watch over them and preserve them from suffering, or from any future punishment.

All these occupations, so apt to produce fatigue, disgust, and impatience in the human soul, brought to her a heavenly peace and joy. Whilst she was scattering the treasures of her charity over so many of her poor fellow beings, her thoughts and affections were always lifted to God, and she often interrupted her benevolent occupations to say aloud to him, "O my Lord! I cannot thank Thee enough for granting me the opportunity of assisting these poor people who are Thy dearest friends, and permitting me thus to serve them myself." And one day as she was making this ejaculatory prayer in the hospital, the poor people believed they saw an angel, who appeared to her

and said, "Rejoice, Elizabeth, for thou too art the friend of Almighty God, and thou dost shine as the moon before His eyes."

Other miraculous signs seemed to prove to simple and faithful souls how pleasing to God were the charity and humility of this Princess. One day when she had been to the city to buy some earthen vases, and several kinds of rings and toys of glass for the poor little children that she had taken under her protection, as she was returning to the castle in a carriage, carrying these various articles in the skirt of her cloak, the awkwardness of the driver caused the vehicle to be upset, and it fell from a high rock down into a heap of stones. Elizabeth, however, was not injured, nor were any of the toys which she was carrying broken. She went at once to distribute them among her little poor children and make them happy.

On another occasion, as she was carrying some articles of food in her apron to a group of destitute persons, she saw with anxiety that she had not enough to allow her to give a portion to each, for other beggars kept coming every moment. She began to pray therefore interiorly, while she distributed what she had in her apron, and as fast as she took out any of the pieces, she found them constantly replaced by others, so that some still remained after she had given every poor person his share. She returned to the castle, singing with her companions the praises of God, who had vouchsafed to communicate to her His omnipotent power, according to the promise which He made: *Amen, amen, I say unto you, He that believeth in Me, the works that I do, he shall do also, and greater than these shall he do.*[1]

Her care and affection were not confined to the people who lived in the neighborhood of her own residence. The inhabitants of every section, even the most distant, of her

[1] St. John xiv, 12.

husband's dominions, were equally the object of her sovereign and maternal solicitude. She gave express orders that all the revenues of the four principalities which the Duke Louis possessed[1] should be devoted exclusively to the relief and support of the poor inhabitants whom the famine left without any resource, and she took care that these orders were executed, in spite of the opposition of most of the Duke's officers. Moreover, to take the place, as it were, of that personal care and help which distance prevented her from giving to this portion of her subjects, she directed all her precious stones, her jewels, and other objects of value to be sold, and the proceeds distributed among them.

These arrangements were continued until the harvest of 1226. Then the Duchess, gathering together all the poor people who were in a condition to work, gave them scythes, and furnished them with new linen, and shoes to protect their feet from being bruised or torn by the stubble remaining in the fields, and sent them to work. Those who were not strong enough to work she presented with clothes which she had ordered to be made, or bought at the market, for this purpose. And she distributed all these articles with her own hands. To each poor person going away she bade an affectionate farewell, and presented him with a small sum; and when her money was all gone, she took her veils and dresses of rich material and divided them among the poor women, saying to them as she did so, "I do not want you to make use of these articles for purposes of dress, but that you should have them sold to relieve your wants, for it is written, 'He who will not work, neither shall he eat.'" A poor old woman to whom the Duchess had given some linen, a pair of shoes, and a cloak, was so overcome with joy, that after declaring that she had never been so happy in her

[1] Thuringia, Hesse, and the Palatinates of Saxony and Osterland.

life, fell flat on the ground as though she were dead. The kind-hearted Elizabeth, greatly alarmed, hastened to lift her up, and reproached herself with having actually sinned by jeopardizing the life of this woman through her imprudence.

I visited with affectionate reverence and with scrupulous care the places which were the theatre of so inexhaustible a charity, of so celestial a devotion. I followed all those steep paths which were trod by the feet of the indefatigable friend of the poor; for a long time my eyes rested upon the magnificent landscape which is to be seen from the heights of Wartburg, thinking that the blessed eyes of Elizabeth had also, during the greater part of her life, contemplated this vast extent of country, and had embraced it all in a single look of that love which has neither its origin nor its reward upon this earth. Alas! the monuments built by the royal almoner have all perished; the people have forgotten her, as they have the Faith of their fathers; a few names only have endured, and preserve for the Catholic pilgrim a trace of the dearly loved Saint. Even in the castle of Wartburg, the memory of Luther,[1] of rebellious and victorious pride, has dethroned that of the humility and charity of Elizabeth; in the ancient chapel where she so often knelt in prayer, it is the pulpit of the proud heresiarch which is shown to travellers. But the site of that hospital which she erected at the gate of her ducal residence, as if she would never lose from sight the full extent of human misery in the midst of the splendors of her exalted position, this modest and hidden site has been left to her and still preserves her name. A hundred years after her death,

[1] He was kept there secretly by his protector, the Elector of Saxony, on his return from the Diet of Worms, to shield him from the sentence pronounced against him. He modestly called this retreat his Isle of Patmos.

in 1331, the hospital was replaced by a Franciscan convent, founded in her honor by the Landgrave Frederick the Serious. At the time of the reformation it was suppressed, when seventeen other convents and churches, in the single city of Eisenach, were ruined and pillaged in a single day, and the monks and priests went out two by two singing the *Te Deum* amidst the hooting of the populace.[1] The monument of the benefactress of the country was not respected any more than others, and the stones were used to repair the fortifications of the castle. But a fountain remains there, a spring of pure, fresh water which runs into the simple basin of a hollowed rock, with no ornament whatsoever, save the numerous flowers and the green grass which surround it. It was there that the Duchess herself washed the linen of the poor, and it is still called *St. Elizabeth's Fountain.* A thick grove surrounds and conceals this spot from most of the passers-by; and there are the scarce discernible ruins of a surrounding wall; the people have named this *Elizabeth's Garden.*

Further on, to the East, at the foot of the mountain on which Wartburg stands, and between this mountain and the ancient Carthusian monastery dedicated to the Saint in 1394,[2] there lies a charming valley, watered by a peaceful stream which flows through meadows filled with roses and lilies; its banks are shaded by venerable oaks, relics of the ancient forests of Germany. In one of its windings this valley forms a secret and solitary gorge, where there stands a poor cottage which was formerly a chapel. It was there that Elizabeth used to meet her poor, the friends of God and her own; hither she came, loving,

[1] In 1524.

[2] This monastery, which bore the name of Elisabethenhaus, has likewise been completely destroyed. A single stone only remains, and that is a tombstone. The site is occupied now by the house of correction and the botanic garden.

ingenious, and indefatigable, making her way by hidden paths through the woods, laden with food and other articles of relief, to save them the painful climb to the castle, and to hide herself from the sight of others. This solitary gorge is still called the *Field of Lilies*, this humble cottage the *Poor Man's Rest*, and the whole valley but a short time since was still known as *Elizabeth's Valley*.[1]

[1] The valley has now changed its name and is called Marienthal, in honor of a grand duchess of Saxe-Weimar.

CHAPTER XIV

Return Home of the Duke Louis; he renders Full Justice to his Dear Monks of Reinhartsbrunn

Confidit in ea cor viri sui.

Prov. XXXI, 11.

In tribus placitum est spiritui meo . . . concordia fratrum, et amor proximorum, et vir et mulier bene sibi consentientes.

Ecclus. XXV, 1, 2.

In the meantime Louis, informed, no doubt, of the evils that were afflicting his country, demanded and obtained permission from the Emperor to return home. He left on the 22nd of June, 1226, and reached Cremona, resting there for the night, on the eve of the Feast of St. John, as fires were being kindled on all the heights. After crossing the Alps safely, he stopped to visit a prince, whose name the historians do not mention, but who was a near relative and friend. He received there a cordial and magnificent welcome, and after a bountiful feast, embellished with music and song, he was shown to his room for the night, where the prince, curious to test the virtue of his guest, had placed a young woman of remarkable beauty in his bed. But the young Duke said at once to his faithful cup-bearer, Lord Varila, "Take this young woman away quietly, and give her a marc of silver to buy herself a new cloak, that she may not be led by her needs to expose herself further to sin. I tell you in all sincerity, that even were adultery not a crime against God, nor a scandal in the eyes of my fellow beings, I would not think of it, simply because of my love for my dear Elizabeth, and because I would not grieve

or trouble her heart." The following morning, when the prince began to jest on this subject, Louis replied to him, "I assure you, my dear cousin, that for the sake of having the whole Roman Empire I would not commit such a sin."

Continuing his route, he arrived at Augsburg on the 2nd of July, where he remained fifteen days to plead the cause of young Henry, son of the Emperor, with the Duke of Bavaria, and to obtain his consent to receive that young prince at his court. Having accomplished his purpose, he started again for Thuringia and crossed the Maine at Schweinfurth, where he was received with great honor by the citizens; but after supper word was brought to him that Count Poppo of Henneberg, his mortal enemy, was preparing to attack and surprise him during the night. To escape this danger, he started immediately, travelled all night, and arrived at Wartburg the following day, which was Friday, about the hour of Nones.

In the meantime the news of the approach of the dearly loved prince had spread throughout Thuringia and caused great joy. These poor famine-afflicted people all felt that the return of their father and generous protector was the signal for the termination of their troubles. His mother and his young brothers, too, were greatly rejoiced; but Elizabeth's joy surpassed that of all the others. It was the first prolonged absence of the husband who was so dear to her, and who alone understood and sympathized with her in all the aspirations of her soul towards God and a better life. She alone, too, with that wonderful instinct which God gives to holy souls, had sounded all the riches of the soul of her husband, whilst others always attributed to him sentiments and passions similar to those of other princes of his time. The principal officers of the ducal household, and especially the steward and marshal, fearing the anger of their master when he should hear of the use which had been made of his treasures and supplies,

went out to meet him, and denounced to him the prodigality of the Duchess, telling him of how she had, despite all their efforts, emptied all the graneries of Wartburg and dissipated all the money which he had left to their keeping. These complaints at such a moment only irritated the Duke, who replied to them, "Is my wife well? That 's all I want to know. What difference does the rest make to me?" Then he added, "I want you to let my good little Elizabeth bestow all the charities she pleases, and aid rather than thwart her. Let her give all that she chooses for God, provided only she leave me Eisenach, Wartburg, and Naumburg. God will restore all the rest to us in His own good time. Charities will never ruin us." And he hurried away at once to meet his dear Elizabeth. When she beheld him again, her joy knew no bounds; she threw herself into his arms and kissed him a thousand times with lips and heart. "Dear sister," he said to her presently, while still embracing her, "what has become of your poor people during this disastrous year?" She replied sweetly, "I have given to God that which is His, and God has preserved for us what is yours and mine."

A tradition adds that, as the Duke was walking up and down the grand hall with her, he saw grain flowing in from all sides, under the gates, so that it was trodden underfoot. Having asked the steward to go and see from whence this came, the latter replied that the bins were so full of grain that it overflowed and was scattered on the floor. Then he returned thanks to God with his wife. Lord Varila told the Duchess what had taken place while they were the guests of the prince, where her husband's fidelity had been put to the test. She threw herself at once on her knees and said, "My God, I am not worthy to have so good a husband; but do Thou help us both to preserve the sanctity of marriage, that we may live together eternally with Thee."

No sooner had this noble and pious Prince returned home than he began again to occupy himself with the interests of his subjects. Whilst he attended prudently and intelligently to the important negotiations which the Emperor had confided to him, notwithstanding his extreme youth, his sword was always ready to defend the monks and the poor. At the same time that he was acting as mediator between the Emperor and King Ottocar of Bohemia, and negotiating the marriage of this sovereign's daughter with Henry, the young king of the Romans, he was engaged in visiting the various portions of his States to discover and to repair any wrongs which had been committed during his absence against the poor people. Several nobleman of Osterland, who had oppressed their vassals and disturbed the public peace, took to flight on hearing of his arrival. He had their castles occupied, and completely destroyed those of Sultz and Kalbenrück.

He went also as soon as possible to visit his dear abbey of Reinhartsbrunn. The abbot complained to him that a certain Lord Saltza, residing in the neighborhood, had taken advantage of his absence to appropriate a piece of ground belonging to the religious, upon a mountain called Aldenberg, which overlooks the valley in which the monastery is situated, and that he had built a fortified intrenchment there, from which he constantly harassed the religious and their subjects. It was Saturday evening when the Landgrave arrived and heard this complaint. He sent a written order at once to the bailiffs of Wartburg and Eisenach to come and meet him at the abbey on the following morning before daylight, with their armed forces and with scaling ladders. Sunday morning, at daybreak, he assisted at a Low Mass, told the abbot not to have the cross born in procession, nor High Mass sung until his return; then mounting his horse, he went to meet his soldiers and led them immediately in an attack upon the castle.

The surprise was complete; the walls were scaled and Lord Saltza himself was made a prisoner. The Duke had him put in chains and led on foot to the abbey. As soon as they arrived, he had the cross brought out and followed himself the ordinary procession of the Mass, while the usurping nobleman and his soldiers were led in chains before the cross. The chanter intoned the verse, *Domine, tu humiliasti sicut vulneratum, superbum;* and all the religious responded, *In brachio virtutis tuae dispersisti inimicos tuos.*[1] After Mass the Duke made Lord Saltza swear that he would refrain from any further act of violence against the monastery, and then released him, after giving orders that the castle which had been taken that morning should be immediately demolished.

The good Prince was especially anxious lest he should be of any expense to the monastery. He had established there a kitchen and a cellar expressly for the use of his household during the time of his stay, and in going away he always left behind food enough to support the whole convent for three days. But on the Sunday of the expedition against Lord Saltza, the abbot begged him to dine with him, and set before him a rich and bountiful feast. On rising from the table the Duke took his treasurer one side and directed him to pay liberally for everything. The treasurer went to the monks and tried to pay them, but they positively refused to take the money, as was becoming well-born religious, to use the words of the chaplain who has left us an account of this scene. "Dear lord treasurer," said they, "anything that we can do, poor monks that we are, is at the command of our good master, and not only to-day, but any time he may please; we do not, therefore, want any of his money." The treasurer did not insist upon their taking it, and left with the Duke. The latter, when they were halfway on the road

[1] Ps. lxxxviii, 11.

to Eisenach, turned to him and inquired whether he had executed his orders, and the treasurer related what had taken place. The Duke was greatly incensed and replied to him, "Since you did not choose to pay for what I consumed with my money, you shall pay for it with your own." And the poor man was obliged to return to Reinhartsbrunn, and from his own purse pay for everything, to the last farthing.

A short time after, the abbot of this same monastery informed the Duke that *certain honorable gentlemen* from Franconia had stolen from him a cask of wine and six horses. The Duke wrote summoning them to restore the stolen property without delay; and as they paid no attention to his summons, he entered Franconia immediately at the head of an army, ravaged the possessions of the guilty parties, and obliged them to come barefooted, in their shirts and with ropes around their necks, to apologize to the convent. He then released them, but not till they had pledged themselves to send a large quantity of good wine and several good horses to the convent.

At about this period a grand court or assembly of princes was held at Merseburg, at which were present most of the nobility of Misnia, Saxony, and the Brandenburg Marches. Those of Hesse and Thuringia came also, following the example of their Duke, Louis, who brought Elizabeth with him, accompanied by a numerous court. An occurrence marked this reunion which furnishes us with a good picture of the manners of the period. A Thuringian knight, greatly renowned for his valor and piety, Lord Gauthier of Settelstædt, a friend and officer of the household of Duke Louis, followed his suzerain thither. He escorted a young lady of remarkable beauty, mounted on a superb steed and bearing a good falcon on her hand. All along the route he halted at intervals of three miles to tilt with whomsoever chose to present him-

self, on condition that if he were unhorsed, his victorious adversary should take from him his armor and equipments, and the palfrey and falcon of the lady, and that she should be obliged to redeem herself with a gold ring. If, on the other hand, Lord Gauthier were to overcome his adversary, the latter was to present a gold ring to the lady. Every time that Lord Gauthier halted there was a great contest among the knights to know who should have the honor of tilting with him, and in order to reconcile them it was necessary that each time he should himself designate the one from among the contestants who should engage in the combat. He made the journey to Merseburg and back in this way without once being overcome; and on her return to Thuringia his lady had on each finger of both hands a gold ring forfeited by a vanquished knight. Lord Gauthier presented the ten rings to the ladies and maids of honor of Elizabeth, which pleased them greatly; and all, together with their mistress, thanked him heartily for his generosity.

CHAPTER XV

The Duke Louis assumes the Cross; his Great Grief at Parting with his Friends, his Family, and Dear St. Elizabeth [1]

Osculantes se alterutrum, fleverunt pariter.
I. Reg. XX, 41.

Quo abiit dilectus tuus, O pulcherrima mulierum? Quo declinavit dilectus? — Cant. V, 17.

And do thou also, for the love of God, learn to part with him who is necessary, and the friend who is dear. — Imitation, Bk. II, Ch. IX.

Thuringia did not long enjoy the presence of her beloved sovereign after his return from Italy, and Elizabeth, whose heart was filled with so much joy at seeing her husband return home, was soon to be condemned to a separation far longer and more painful. All Germany was preparing for a crusade. The Emperor Frederick II, answering at length the repeated summons of the Sovereign Pontiffs, Honorius III and Gregory IX, had invited the nobility and the faithful of Christendom to range themselves under the banner of the Cross, and follow him to the Holy Land, in the autumn of 1227. The idea and name alone of crusade still made every heart beat, and awoke the deepest emotions of the people of entire nations. Those grand and holy expeditions exercised over souls a charm so powerful that no valiant knight, no pious and fervent Christian,

[1] The Duke Louis at that time was twenty-seven years of age, and St. Elizabeth nineteen.

could escape its influence. The memory of the almost fabulous exploits of Richard Cœur de Lion, forty years before, was still fresh in the minds of the chivalry and of the people. The brilliant and unexpected success of the Fourth Crusade had dazzled all Europe. They had witnessed the downfall of that old Byzantine Empire, which had never done anything but betray or abandon the Christians while fighting for their Faith, but which still held an important place in the traditional veneration of the people; and upon its ruins there had risen in a day a new empire, founded by a few French noblemen and a few Venetian mariners. It was more than enough to stir and inflame all imaginations, apart even from the inspirations of faith. But the latter had lost none of their force. The whole of the thirteenth century was penetrated with an ardent desire to save the tomb of Christ, and compel the East to bow down before the Cross; that desire perished only with St. Louis. Germany, which up to that time had not always been the first to precipitate herself into these noble dangers, suddenly felt herself inflamed with an enthusiasm which was brought to life largely by the verses of the numerous poets of that period. Walther von der Vogelweide, who, better than any other, reflected the manners and the passions of his time, and who took part in this Crusade, understood and expressed well this attraction which Christian souls felt towards the land which had been bedewed by the blood of Christ. "We all know," he exclaimed, before starting on this expedition, "how unfortunate this noble and holy land is; how abandoned and desolate it is! Weep, Jerusalem, weep! How forgotten thou art! Life is passing, and death will find us sinners. It is in dangers and trials that grace is gained; let us go and heal the wounds of Christ, let us go and break the chains that fetter His country. O Queen of all women, show us thy assistance! It was there that thy Son was put to death! It

was there that He was baptized, He so pure, that we might be purified; it was there that He permitted Himself to be sold, in order to redeem us, He so rich, for us so poor! It was there that He endured an awful death! Hail, O Cross, and lance, and thorns! Woe to you, pagans! God wishes by the arms of the brave to revenge His injuries!"

The royal poet of Navarre, Thibaut of Champagne, was inspired with like emotions, when in some of his most beautiful verses he thus addressed his knights, "Know well, my lords, that he who will not go to that land where Christ lived and died, he who will not take the Cross beyond the sea, shall not without great difficulty enter paradise. Every man who cherishes in his heart any piety, any remembrance of our Sovereign Lord, ought to strive to avenge Him, to deliver His land and His country. All valiant knights will go, all who love God and His honor in this world. Only the ignoble will remain behind, the seekers after their own ease and comfort. How blind are they who, throughout their whole life, give no help to God, and who for so little lose the glory of the world! God, who allowed Himself to be put to death on the Cross for us, will say to us on that day when all shall stand before Him, 'You who have helped Me to bear My Cross, shall go where the angels are; there you shall see Me and My Mother, Mary; but you who have never rendered Me any service, shall descend to the depths of hell.' Sweet lady, crowned Queen, pray for us, Blessed Virgin, and then nothing can harm us."[1]

Such sentiments could nowhere find a more earnest response than with the Duke Louis of Thuringia, whose vassal the poet Walther had been; none could have been more ready than he to follow his Emperor and his comrades in arms to the relief of the Holy Land. His great courage, the earnestness of his faith and of his piety, all

[1] Poetry of the King of Navarre, poem 45.

that was generous and fervent and disinterested, in a word all that was Christian in his soul, at once urged him to take the Cross, or, as was then said in Germany, to put on the *Flower of Christ.*

To these personal motives were added the noble examples which he found in the records of his own family. His father's brother and predecessor, Louis the Pious, had accompanied Richard Cœur de Lion and Philip Augustus to Palestine, and had there covered himself with glory.[1] His father-in-law, Andrew of Hungary, had spent several years beneath Eastern skies, fighting the infidels. It would have been derogatory to his nobility to have remained at home; nor did he hesitate long. Meeting, on one of his journeys, the venerable Bishop Conrad of Hildesheim, he confided his intention to him, and having received his approbation, he made a vow to join the expedition which was preparing, and received the Cross from the hands of that prelate.

In the meantime, as he was returning to Wartburg, he bethought himself of the grief and the cruel anxiety which his dearly loved Elizabeth would feel on learning of his resolution; and as she was, moreover, pregnant at that time with her fourth child, he had not the courage to speak to her on the subject. He decided to conceal his intention up to the time of his departure, in order not to afflict, any sooner than was necessary, her whom he loved so tenderly, and not to jeopardize her health; and instead of attaching the cross which he had taken on the outside of his garments, he contented himself with carrying it concealed upon his person, as long as it was possible for him not to announce his approaching departure.

But one evening when he was alone with the Duchess,

[1] A very interesting poem on the crusade of this prince may be found in Wilken's *History of the Crusades*, Supplement No. II of Vol. IV.

and they were seated side by side, in a moment of that tender and intimate familiarity which prevailed between them, Elizabeth happened to unfasten her husband's belt, and was rummaging over the contents of the pouch which was attached to it. Suddenly she drew out the cross which the Crusaders were accustomed to wear attached to their clothes. In an instant she realized the calamity which threatened her, and overwhelmed with grief and dismay, she sunk unconscious to the floor. The Duke, greatly distressed, lifted her up, and endeavored to recall her to herself, and to calm her grief by the tenderest and most affectionate words; then talked with her at length from a religious point of view, making use even of expressions from the Holy Scriptures, to which she was never insensible. "It is for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ that I am doing it," he said to her; "you would not wish to prevent one from doing for God what I should be obliged to do for a temporal prince, for the Emperor and the Empire, if they were to ask it." After a long silence and many tears, she said to him, "Dear brother, if it be not against the word of God, stay with me." But he replied to her, "Dear sister, permit me to go, for it is a vow which I have made to God." Then, returning again to herself, she sacrificed her own will to that of God, and said to him, "Against the will of God I have no wish to keep you. May God grant you the grace to do His will in all things; I have made the sacrifice to Him of both you and myself. May He in His mercy watch over you; may every blessing be always with you; that shall be my constant prayer. Go, then, in the name of God." After another interval of silence, they spoke of the child which she was bearing, and they both resolved to consecrate it to God from its birth. In case it were to be a son, they agreed that he should be placed in the abbey of Ramersdorf; but if it were a daughter, in

the monastery of Premonstratensians of Aldenberg near Wetzlar.

The Duke, no longer having any motive for keeping his intention secret, made it known to all his subjects. At the same time he announced that this expedition would be undertaken at his own expense, and that he would make no extraordinary levy of money upon his people, happy in being able to make some return to God for the benefits which he had received from Him. After having given his attention to the military preparations which his project required, he convoked the States of the country in a solemn assembly, which was held at Creuzburg. He made known to them the details of his plan, and took with them the necessary measures for the good administration of the country during his absence. He earnestly exhorted the lords to govern the people with moderation and equity, and to ensure the reign of justice and peace between themselves and their vassals. Before retiring from the assembly he addressed to them the following words in tender accents:[1] "Dear and faithful brothers in arms, barons and noble knights, and all of you, my dear people; you know that during the lifetime of my illustrious father, of pious memory, our country had to undergo cruel wars and long troubles. You all know how many trials my noble father had to endure, how many crosses and hardships, to defend himself against the powerful enemies he had made, and to preserve his States from entire ruin. By dint of courage and generosity he succeeded, and his name became formidable to all. But to me, God has granted as to Solomon, the

[1] We are indebted for this discourse to his chaplain Berthold, who did not leave the Prince during the last years of his life. See the Mss. of Gotha. Theod. and Winkelmann give it abridged. Its authenticity cannot be doubted. The classics were not well enough known at that time for any one to think of imitating their harangues.

son of David, peace and a tranquil life. I see around me no neighbors whom I have any reason to fear, as they likewise have no cause to apprehend unlawful violence on my part. If I have had some quarrels in the past, I am now at peace with all the world, thanks to God, Who gives us peace. You should recognize this blessing and be grateful to God for it. As for me, for the love of God, Who has bestowed His graces so bountifully upon me, to testify my gratitude to Him for them, and for the salvation of my soul, I want now to go to the East, to console the dear Christians who are oppressed there, and to defend them against the enemies of the name and the blood of God. I shall make this distant expedition at my own expense, without imposing upon you, my dear subjects, any new burden. I recommend to the protection of the Most High my good and well-beloved wife, my little children, my dear brothers, my friends, my people, and my country, all that I am leaving willingly for the honor of His holy name. I earnestly recommend you to preserve peace among yourselves during my absence; it is especially my wish that those in power should conduct themselves in a Christian spirit towards my poor people. Finally I ask that you will graciously pray to God often for me, that He may defend me from all harm during this absence from home, and that He will bring me back safe and sound into your midst, provided such be His most merciful will; for above all things, I submit both myself and you, and all that is mine, to the will of His Divine Majesty."

In these beautiful words there is revealed to us the true significance of what at that time was called the *Mystery of the Crusade*, a mystery of faith, of devotion, and love, which will always be impenetrable to the cold intellects of unbelieving ages. In listening to this address, so worthy of a Christian prince, the whole assembly

was profoundly moved; the most sturdy knights were overwhelmed with grief; tears and frequent sighs expressed the anxiety which was caused by the departure of the young and well-beloved sovereign.

The Duke then selected with great prudence the different officers whom he intended to place at the head of his provinces, and designated the magistrates of the cities from among the wisest and most responsible citizens. He provided for all the private affairs of his own house, and especially recommended his dear Elizabeth to the care of his mother, his brothers, and all his officers. "I know very well," said the steward, "that Madam the Duchess will give away all that she finds, and that she will reduce us to misery." Louis replied that he had no objection to that, and that God would replace whatever she might give away.

In order that his people might more perfectly share the impressions which prompted his resolution to go, he had a drama produced at Eisenach, at his own expense, by actors taken from among the clergy, in which were presented all the scenes of the passion and death of our Saviour. We may conceive the enthusiasm which must have been produced upon the pure and lively imaginations of that period by dramatic solemnities of such a character. They were so impressive by their accuracy that he thought it best to have them repeated a second time.

He went also to visit all the convents of Eisenach, including those of women, asked their blessing, distributed generous offerings among them, and recommended himself to their prayers. Then he left Eisenach, accompanied by his wife, his mother, his children, and his brothers, and went first to Reinhartsbrunn, to the monastery which he loved above all others, and to which he was attached by the ties of a special devotion and the sweetest familiarity. After having assisted at the office there, as the monks

were leaving the choir, at the end of Compline, to receive holy water, according to their custom, the good Prince took his place by the side of the priest who was sprinkling them, and as each one of the religious passed, he embraced him affectionately; even the youngest choir boys he took in his arms and pressed a paternal kiss upon their innocent foreheads. Deeply moved by so much kindness, the religious burst into tears, and nothing was heard but the sound of suppressed sobs and sighs, which were forced from them by the thought of losing their protector. The Duke could not restrain his emotions, and wept himself; a sort of gloomy presentiment seized upon him, and he said to them, "It is not without reason that you weep, my dearest friends; for I know that when I am gone ravenous wolves will fall upon you, and their bloodthirsty tooth will torment you cruelly. When you shall be distressed and impoverished, you will realize that you have lost a defender and a sovereign such as there are few to be found. But I know for certain that the Most High, mindful of my pilgrimage, will open His compassionate heart to you, and I beseech Him with all my heart to do so, now and forever." Then he left them, and they watched his departure with affectionate looks and with eyes filled with tears.

The Duke, still accompanied by all his family, went from Reinhartsbrunn to Smalkald, which he had appointed as the rendezvous for the knights and others who were going with him to the Holy Land. It was there that he was to bid farewell to his relatives, to his wife, and all who were dear to him. As soon as he had arrived there, he took his brother Henry one side, and said to him, "I have done all that I could, with God's help, to walk in the way of salvation for my soul, and I recall nothing that can compromise it, except it be that I have not yet destroyed, as my father directed me to

do, the castle of Eyterburg, which was built to the detriment of the neighboring monastery. I beseech you, therefore, my sweet brother, not to forget to demolish it completely, as soon as I am gone; it will profit the salvation of your soul."

Finally the day fixed for their departure, the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, having arrived, they had to separate. It was in the midst of the knights who had come from the most remote parts of his States, and of the people who pressed about him, to look for the last time at their beloved Prince, that Louis had to tear himself from the arms of those whom he loved. He commenced by blessing affectionately his two brothers, both of whom were in tears; he earnestly recommended to them his mother, his children, and his beloved Elizabeth. His little children held him by his clothes, embraced him crying, and bade him good-by in their childish language: "Good-night, dear papa, a thousand times good-night, dear, good papa." He could not restrain his tears as he embraced them; and when he turned to his dearly loved Elizabeth, his sobs and tears so stifled his voice that he could say nothing. Then clasping her with one arm, and drawing his mother to him with the other, he held them thus, pressed to his heart, unable to speak, covering them with his kisses and weeping bitterly, for more than half an hour. At last he said, "My dearest mother, I must part from you; I leave to you, in my place, your two other sons, Conrad and Henry; I recommend to you my wife, whose anguish you see." But neither mother nor wife would let go the object of their love, and both clung to him. His brothers and the other knights pressed in confusion about this sorrowful group. All hearts were moved, all eyes were filled, as they witnessed this son so devoted, this husband so loving and faithful, striving to tear himself from the last embraces of the beings whom he loved

above all else in the world, to go and serve his God at the risk of his life. The poor people mingled their sincere and loud sorrow with that of the princes and warriors. Moreover, they were not the only family overwhelmed with the grief of parting. There were there, in the crowd of Crusaders who were to accompany the Duke, many fathers, husbands, and brothers, who were weeping and struggling like their sovereign to tear themselves away from their families and friends. Each one seemed to have reserved for this place this moment of cruel trial. The Thuringians, the Hessians, the Saxons, were all united here by their affliction, as by the object of their expedition. So many bonds could not be broken without a supernatural effort. On all sides were heard lamentation and sobs, confused and dull sounds, which were mingled in a common anguish.

Many, however, having more control over their feelings, or who had previously bid farewell to their relatives, or who perhaps were sufficiently alone in life to have no family or other ties of any kind to sever, were impressed in that solemn moment only by the sacred character of the enterprise in which they were about to engage. These, crusaders and pilgrims before all things, while the others were weeping and lamenting, sang hymns, acknowledging their gratitude to God, Who deigned to permit them to fight for the honor of His holy name. The sound of these canticles of thanksgiving mingled with the cries of grief and lamentation, which were everywhere heard; and thus were united, by a sublime contrast, the exaltation of joy inspired by the love of God and the outpouring of profound grief which this same love had met and conquered.

When at length the Duke was able to tear himself from the embraces of his mother, he found himself, as it were, imprisoned by the knights who were to remain behind, and by the poor people, to whom he was with good reason

so dear. Each one wanted to hold him back, to embrace him again, to take him by the hand, or at least to touch his garments; but, choked with tears, he replied to no one. It was only after many efforts that he succeeded in making his way to the place where his courser was waiting for him. Having mounted, he took his place in the midst of the Crusaders and started, mingling his voice with the others in the sacred songs which they were singing in chorus.

His beloved Elizabeth was still with him, for she had not been able to resign herself to receive her farewell at the same time as the others, and had succeeded in being able to accompany him as far as the frontier of Thuringia. They rode along thus side by side, their hearts oppressed with sadness. Unable to speak, the young Duchess could only express her emotions by her sighs. When they arrived at the frontier of the country, she did not have the courage to leave him, and continued another day's journey by his side, and then a second, overcome and led on by her grief and her love. At the close of this second day she declared that she did not know whether she could ever leave him, whether she would not rather go with him to the end.[1] At last, however, she had to yield; and that divine love which is as strong as death, overcame in these two tender and noble hearts the love of the creature. Lord Varila, the grand cup-bearer, approached the Duke and said to him, "My lord, it is time; let Madam the Duchess go; it is quite necessary to do so." At these words they both burst into tears and embraced each other convulsively, whilst their sobs and groans moved the hearts of all the assistants. The prudent Lord Varila in the meantime persevered in his efforts to separate them; but these two souls who had loved one another so tenderly and so intimately, clung to each other with an insuper-

[1] Mss. of Berthold, an eye witness.

able force in that supreme moment. Finally Louis mastered himself and gave the signal to start. He held up to the Duchess a ring which he wore on his finger, and which he used as a seal for their private letters. "Elizabeth," he said to her, "O dearest of sisters! see this ring which I carry with me, and upon which is engraved, in sapphire, the Lamb of God with His banner; let this be in your eyes a sure and certain sign as to all that concerns me. Whoever shall bring this ring to you, dear and faithful sister, and shall tell you that I am alive or dead, believe whatever he may say to you."

Then he added, "May God bless you, dear little Elizabeth, my precious sister, my sweet treasure; may the ever merciful Lord guard your soul and give you courage; may He bless, too, the child that rests near your heart; we will do as we agreed together concerning it. Farewell! Always remember our life together, our tender and holy love; never forget me in any of your prayers. Farewell, I can stay no longer!" And he departed, leaving his dearly loved in the arms of her ladies. She followed him for a long time with her eyes; then, half-dead, bathed in tears, and amid the lamentations of her companions, she turned towards Wartburg, carrying in her heart the presentiment that she would never see him again.

On her return to her sad home, she immediately laid aside her royal costume, to put on with too well-founded a feeling of despair the garments of a widow, which she never afterwards put off.

"At the present day," says a pious Franciscan who wrote the life of St. Elizabeth, in the time of Louis XIV, "at the present day, when so little true love is to be found among married people, among those even who seem to be possessed of piety, . . . it will perhaps cause some astonishment to see in a princess of such interior recollection and austerity so much attachment for the Prince,

her husband." I will not follow this good religious in the defence which he thought it necessary to make of this pronounced trait in the life of Elizabeth. I might say of her what was said by St. Bernard of Mary, "Be not surprised, my dear brothers, that Mary has been called the martyr of love; to be surprised at this, we must forget that St. Paul considered it as one of the greatest crimes of the Gentiles that they were without affection." Suffice it for me to say without any hesitation, after the numerous details that I have related, that of all the souls that the Church has crowned with her glory, there is none who presents so truly as Elizabeth does the perfect model of a wife; none who realized to the same extent that she did the idea that may be conceived of a truly Christian marriage; none who so ennobled and sanctified a human love by giving it so high a place in a heart which was inundated with the love of God.

Nor was it, moreover, so rare a spectacle in those days of strong and pure emotions, to see this union of legitimate earthly affections with the most fervent and austere piety. It would be a pleasant as well as a profitable task, and I may some day claim it for myself, to show how, during the Catholic ages, the most tender and impassioned sentiments of the human heart were sanctified and made stronger by faith, and how much dignity and strength even purely human love, bowing always before the Cross of Christ, acquired in that constant victory of Christian humility over pride and selfishness. Sentiments less varied, less extended, perhaps less refined than at the present day, were then far more profound; and when once religion had put upon them the seal of her immortality, there was developed in them I know not what intimate and marvellous force, and a sort of ineffable transfiguration, in which the calmness of age was united with the freshness of innocence, and all the energy of passion with all the purity

and simplicity of religion. All who are familiar with the historical and literary monuments of the Middle Ages appreciate the truth of this assertion. Moreover, that which especially characterized the moral and interior life of those times was the inseparable union of the most ardent and intense affections with their legitimate consecration; it was the recognition of duty and religious obligation as an essential element of the impassioned outpouring of the heart. Here again, as in so many other respects, Elizabeth was an admirable and complete personification of her age. Was it not in that century that St. Louis, throughout his whole life, preserved for his wife Margaret the noble and passionate tenderness of his first years; that this great king, this great Saint, showing the ring that he always wore, and upon which he had had engraved these three words,— *God, France,* and *Margaret,* — said with beautiful simplicity, *This ring encircles all that is dear to my heart?* Was it not, moreover, in this century that Edward I of England erected those fifteen stone crosses, the remains of which may be counted among the wonders of Christian art, at the places where the coffin of his well-beloved wife, Queen Eleanor, rested on its way from the city where she died to Westminster? It was undoubtedly the most beautiful and magnificent funeral pomp that was ever known; but was it too much for the woman who, twenty years before, went with her husband to share with him the dangers of the Crusade, sucked with her own lips the poison which a Saracen's dagger had left in Edward, and so saved his life at the peril of her own?

It is a remarkable thing, moreover, and one that has not been justly appreciated, so far as my observation has gone, up to the present time, that this union is found to exist in fiction as well as in reality, and that the creations of the imagination yield it a tribute of homage as striking as the monuments of history. All the poetry of Elizabeth's

time, or of an earlier period, breathes the same spirit. It was not till a later day that illegitimate love, or one not consecrated by the Church, could inspire interest.[1] Up to that time, it would seem that in a tale of love, marriage, or at least a betrothal, was an essential condition in the narrative to warrant Christian souls in being moved by the poet's verses; love and interest, far from terminating with marriage, as in modern works of fiction, seemed almost to commence with it. Conjugal fidelity is in some sort the pivot and the soul of all this beautiful poetry. The most animated and romantic scenes are those which take place between husband and wife. Not only was this the case in legends [2] and poems especially devoted to religious subjects, but works which appear to be purely chivalrous and profane bear the same impress of the consecration of sentiment by duty. It is only of woman as the faithful and devoted wife that these chivalric poets pronounce the apotheosis in those many verses, in which she is almost deified, and in which she seems to share in the tender veneration reserved for Mary.[3] In our national literature, the beautiful and chaste love of Roland and his betrothed Aude, in the romance of *Roncevaux;* and the admirable history of the misfortunes of Gérard of Roussillon, shared by his wife, are sufficient to give us an idea of how our

[1] *Tristan* is the first great poem of the Middle Ages in which interest rests upon a passion condemned by religion. It did not become popular, especially in Germany, till towards the middle of the thirteenth century.

[2] Such are, for example, the beautiful legend of St. Alexis, which is to be found in German as well as in Italian; those also of St. Northburg of Swabia and St. Mathilda, and the Episodes of Faustinianus and of Crescentia in the *Kaiser Chronik*, published by M. Massmann.

[3] See, for example, the poem of the *Winsbeke*, in Schiller, *Thesaurus antiquit. Germ.*, those of Henry Frauenlob, who owes his name to his beautiful songs in honor of women, several manuscript poems at Heidelberg, etc.

own poets recognized this essentially Christian principle. In Germany, the adopted country of Elizabeth, it may be said to have been more generally observed and appreciated than elsewhere. We see the most striking and popular example of it in the *Niebelungen*, in Siegfried and Chriemhild, the husband and wife so admirable in their simplicity, their purity, and their devotion. This star of pure love which distinguishes the most beautiful historical traditions of the country, as those of Henry the Lion, Florentia, Genevieve of Brabant, and Count Ulric, is, moreover, the conspicuous feature of the great poems of the chivalric periods. Perceval is so absorbed in contemplating the three drops of blood on the snow, which recall to him the white and rosy complexion of his wife, that he is heedless of glory and neglects the fight. Lohengrin's wife, whenever her husband leaves her, faints and remains in a swoon until he returns. In the *Titurel*, when the faithful husband and wife are reunited in death, two beautiful vines spring up from the grave in which they rest side by side, and interlacing each other as they grow become a support to one another. Beautiful and noble symbols of those holy affections which gave to the earth only sweet flowers, but the roots and fruits of which were elsewhere.

CHAPTER XVI

Death of the Duke Louis on his Way to the Holy Land

Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa: placita enim erat Deo anima illius: propter hoc properavit educere illum de medio iniquitatum. — Sap. IV, 13, 14.

After losing sight of his sad and dear Elizabeth, Louis soon recovered that cheerful and hopeful energy which prevailed in these distant expeditions, and that holy joy which faith finds in the consciousness of the sacrifices which she imposes and the victories which she obtains.

He had with him the élite of the chivalry of his States; five counts, Louis of Wartburg, Gunther of Kefernburg, Meinhard of Mulhberg, Henry of Stolberg, and Burkhard of Brandeberg; his cup-bearer, Lord Rudolph of Varila; his marshal, Lord Henry of Ebersberg; his chamberlain, Lord Henry of Fahnern; his seneschal, Herman of Hosheim, and many other barons and knights.[1] The number of foot-soldiers who followed him was small, we are told by one of the chroniclers, because of the great distance they had to march. Five priests, and among them his chaplain Berthold, who wrote his life, performed the duties of saying Mass, hearing confessions, and rendering other spiritual help, to all these warriors during their expedition. Besides the counts and lords, who were the immediate vassals of the Duke Louis, he was accompanied,

[1] Their names, as well as those I have given, are found in Rothe, p. 1717. See also Justi, p. 88, etc.

in his quality of Commander-in-chief of the Crusaders of all Central Germany, by a great number of other knights from Swabia, Franconia, and the banks of the Rhine. Among them we find the name of Count Louis of Gleichen, so celebrated in Germany for his romantic adventures during this Crusade. A tradition, well founded and supported by numerous scientific proofs, relates that having been made a prisoner in Palestine, and taken to Egypt, he was delivered by the daughter of the Sultan, Melechsala, on condition that he should marry her, although he had left his wife, née Countess of Orlamunde, in Thuringia. He brought her to Rome, where, it is claimed, he obtained a dispensation from the Pope for this double union, and from there to his castle of Gleichen, where the two wives lived together in the most perfect union.[1]

With this strong escort the Duke marched through Franconia, Swabia, and Bavaria, crossed the Tyrolese Alps, and going by way of Lombardy and Tuscany, joined the Emperor at Apulia. The meeting took place in the city of Troja, towards the end of August, 1227. The Emperor had gathered together a powerful army; nearly sixty thousand men were encamped there under the banner of the Cross. But an epidemic had already broken out among his troops, and prevented their embarking. Everything, however, was ready for it. The Landgrave had a secret conference with the Emperor on the Island of St. Andrew, to arrange the details of the management of the expedition; for, despite his youth, no prince inspired more confidence in his sovereign, as well as in his inferiors. Immediately after this conference the two princes embarked at Brindisi, having recommended their voyage to God by solemn prayers and other religious ceremonies.

[1] The tomb of this count, resting between his two wives, is seen in the cathedral of Erfurth. The traditions of French chivalry attribute the same incident to Giles of Trazegnies.

But from the moment he set foot aboard the ship, he felt himself seized with chills and fever. At the end of three days, the Emperor himself, unable to endure the voyage, put into port at Otranto,[1] where the Empress was.[2] The Duke followed him there, although a large portion of his forces had continued on their way to Palestine. He paid a visit to the Empress with proper respect; but the fever increased in violence, and it was with difficulty that he got back to his ship, where he was obliged to take to his bed. The disease made rapid progress, and he was soon compelled to abandon all hope of recovering. The Duke was the first to realize the gravity of his condition; he dictated his will at once, and summoned the Patriarch of Jerusalem to bring him the last sacraments. That prelate came, accompanied by the Bishop of St. Croix, and administered Extreme Unction to him. Then, after having confessed his sins with humility and with great contrition, the Prince assembled his knights around his bed, and received the Bread of Life in their presence with the most fervent devotion and expressions of the most lively faith.[3]

Neither in the account given by his chaplain, who was present with him during his last moments, nor in that of any of the historians who have since described them, is there found a word which could lead us to believe that the saintly and brave knight experienced any regret at giving up his life. Neither his youth, in the flower of which he went to his grave, nor his country, from which he died so far away, nor the power which he had so nobly and so thoroughly exercised; neither his relatives, nor his

[1] He also fell ill there, or feigned to be so, and disbanded his army, which led to his excommunication by Pope Gregory IX.

[2] Yolande of Brienne, who died soon after.

[3] At that time Extreme Unction was always given before Holy Viaticum.

children, whom he had scarce had time to know, nor even Elizabeth, whom he had so faithfully, so tenderly, and so supremely loved; none of these treasures seem to have held his soul back, eager as it was for heaven. On the contrary, we are told that he was anxious to die; and the happiness of meeting his death under the banner of Christ, in His service, and in His pay, as it were, after having sacrificed everything for that object, this happiness filled his soul to the exclusion of every other thought and left no place in his heart for any earthly remembrance or regret. As he had lived but for God and in God, it seemed to him a very simple thing to die at the first moment that God willed it, and at the post assigned him. As a docile and faithful soldier, he received without murmur the signal which called him away before the close of the combat. He who had shed so many tears at leaving, for a time only, his dear family; he who had torn himself with so much anguish from the arms of a wife whom he might hope soon to see again, in this moment of complete and irreparable separation had no longer a sigh or a tear to give her. He could lament and weep indeed at the thought of being separated from her on earth; but, at the gate of heaven, that dear image could present itself to him only in the midst of future joys and eternal happiness.

He merely directed some of his knights to go and announce his death to his family and to his Elizabeth, bearing to her the ring which he had shown her, and certain words which have not been preserved for us. He also besought all his followers whom he saw around him, in the name of God and of Our Lady, to think of him if they lived to return from their holy enterprise, to carry back his bones to Thuringia, and to bury them at Reinhartsbrunn, where he had chosen his place of burial; as also never to forget him in their prayers. Some time before he

expired he saw a multitude of white doves who filled the room and flew around his bed. "See! see!" he exclaimed, "those doves, whiter than snow!" The assistants thought him delirious. A moment afterwards he said, "I must fly away with all these beautiful doves." Saying these words, he slept in the Lord, quitting this mortal pilgrimage to enter into the eternal country, and take his place among the knights of God,[1] on the third day after the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin,[2] having just completed his twenty-seventh year.

As soon as he had breathed his last, the Chaplain Berthold saw the doves of which he had spoken flying away towards the East. He followed them a long time with his eyes, and was not surprised that the Holy Ghost, Who had descended upon the Son of God under the form of a dove, should have sent angels in this white raiment to meet and conduct to the Son of Eternal Justice this young soul who had preserved during his mortal pilgrimage the innocence and purity of the dove.[3] His face, so handsome in life, seemed to have taken on a new beauty in the midst of death; and it was impossible to contemplate without admiration the expression of faith fulfilled, of sweet peace and ineffable joy, which was depicted upon his pale cheeks, with that placidity of death whose charm is so profound and so pure.

It was a terrible affliction to those who had followed him so far to see him die in their arms, in the full bloom of his youth and valor, and to find themselves without a leader in so perilous an expedition. It was a still greater

[1] In the French prayer-books of the Middle Ages, the angels are often called *Knights, friends of God.*

[2] September 11, 1227.

[3] We know the beautiful legend of St. Polycarp, who was burned alive. His blood extinguished the flames, and from his ashes a white dove was seen to rise, who flew away towards heaven. In like manner a dove was seen to rise from the stake of Joan of Arc.

blow for those among his vassals and brothers in arms who had gone ahead of him, who had not had the sad privilege of being present with him in his last moments and of receiving his last breath, and to whom news was brought, far out at sea, of the loss they had sustained. Their cries of grief and prolonged lamentations rent the air and resounded over the waves. "Alas! dear sovereign," they said, "alas! noble knight, why have you left us thus exiles in a strange land? Why have we lost you, you the light of our eyes, the leader of our pilgrimage, the hope of our return? Woe to us!"

They retraced their course at once. Together with those who had remained on land, they all took a solemn oath to execute the last wishes of their dearly beloved prince, if they should escape themselves from the dangers of the Crusade. Meanwhile they celebrated his obsequies with solemnity, and carefully buried his body; then they resumed their route to accomplish their vow.

CHAPTER XVII

Elizabeth hears of the Death of her Husband; her Great Anguish and Tribulation

Quo mihi avulsus es? quo mihi raptus a manibus, homo unanimis, homo secundum cor meum? Amavimus nos in vita: quomodo in morte sumus separati? . . . Omnino opus mortis, horrendum divortium. Quis enim tam suavi vinculo mutui nostri non pepercisset amoris, nisi totius suavitatis inimica mors? — St. Bernard, in Cant. serm. 26.

Flebat igitur irremediabilibus lacrymis.

Tob. X, 4.

The lords whom the Duke Louis had charged on his deathbed to go and announce his death in Thuringia had a long and difficult journey to accomplish; and the sad news which they had to bring back to their country was not of a nature to cause them to hasten their progress. The young Duchess, during this interval, had given birth to her fourth child, Gertrude, and could not see the messengers when they arrived. It was to the Duchess mother, therefore, and to the young princes Conrad and Henry that they announced the cruel and unexpected loss which had befallen them. In the midst of the general consternation which this news spread in the family and among the people of the illustrious dead, some good and prudent men considered the effect which it might produce upon the young mother, now a widow without knowing it. Sophia herself felt again a mother's tenderness for her whom her son had loved so much; she gave the strictest orders that no one should allow her daughter-in-law to suspect the misfortune that had befallen her, and took every pre-

caution to ensure the faithful execution of her orders. When sufficient time had elapsed after her confinement, and it became necessary to make known to this tender and faithful wife the cross which God had sent her, it was the Duchess Sophia who undertook the painful duty.[1] Accompanied by several noblemen and discreet ladies, she went to her daughter-in-law, whom she found in her own apartment. Elizabeth received them with respect and affection, and made them sit down around the couch upon which she was reclining, without having any suspicion of the object of their visit. When they were all seated, the Duchess Sophia said to her, "Take courage, my dearly loved daughter, and do not permit yourself to be troubled by what has happened to your husband, my son, by God's will, to which, as you know, he had wholly resigned himself." Elizabeth, seeing her mother-in-law's calmness, as she uttered these words without a tear, did not suspect the full extent of her misfortune, and imagining that her husband had been made a prisoner, answered, "If my brother is a captive, with the help of God and of our friends, he shall soon be ransomed. My Father, I am sure, will come to our assistance, and I shall soon be consoled." But the Duchess Sophia immediately replied to her, "O my dearest daughter! be patient, and take this ring which he has sent you; for, unhappily for us, he is dead." "Oh, madam!" cried the young Duchess, "what do you say?" "He is dead," repeated the mother. At these words Elizabeth turned pale, then quite red; letting her arms fall upon her knees, and clasping her hands tightly together, she said, in a stifled voice, "Oh! my divine Lord! my divine Lord! the whole world is now dead for

[1] According to another account, supported by several chronicles, it was the stone in the ring that the Duke had given her which, falling from its setting at the very moment in which Louis expired, led Elizabeth to conceive the first thought of her affliction.

me, the world and all that it contains of sweetness." Then rising in a distracted manner, she began running as hard as she could through the rooms and corridors of the castle, crying, "He is dead, dead, dead!" She did not stop till, reaching the refectory, her further progress here was impeded by a wall, to which she clung closely, bathed in tears. She seemed bereft of her reason. The Duchess Sophia and the other ladies followed her, drew her away from the wall which she was hugging, made her sit down, and strove to comfort her. But she at once began to weep and sob, uttering broken sentences: "Now," she kept repeating, "now I have lost all, O my dearly loved brother! O dearest friend of my soul! O my good and gentle husband! You are then dead, and you have left me in misery? How shall I live without you? Ah! poor forsaken widow, unhappy woman that I am! May He Who does not forsake the widow and the orphan comfort me! O my God, send me comfort! O my Jesus, strengthen me in my weakness!"

In the meantime her maids came for her and endeavored to persuade her to return to her apartment. She permitted herself to be led by them, tottering as she went; but on reaching her chamber, she fell upon her face to the floor. When they had raised her up, she commenced again her tears and lamentations. The Duchess Sophia now in her turn abandoned herself to her maternal grief, and mingled her tears with those of her daughter-in-law, as did also the noble ladies who were witnesses of this sad spectacle. Following their example, the whole ducal household, all the inhabitants of the castle of Wartburg, where Louis had spent nearly all of his short life, gave themselves up without reserve to the grief which until then had been repressed by the regulations enforced in consequence of the poor widow's condition. The spectacle of her profound anguish added still more to the impression

produced by the irreparable loss of the beloved sovereign. For eight days the home was wholly given up to tears, lamentations, and cries of grief. But neither this abundant sympathy, nor any effort to comfort her, could alleviate the affliction of Elizabeth; she sought in vain a remedy for her despair. And yet there was near her, we are told by her pious historian, an all-powerful Comforter, the Holy Spirit, the Father of widows, of orphans, of broken hearts, Who did not permit her to be tried beyond her strength, and Who wished to crown her with His graces, whilst filling the cup of her sorrow.

Behold, now, this dear Saint, whom we have seen blessed, in a truly Christian union, with the choicest blessing of this life, a widow at the age of twenty; the wife, loving and so much beloved, condemned henceforth to the supreme trial of desolation of heart. It was not enough for the divine Saviour of her soul that she should have been made acquainted, even from her childhood, with the trials of life, with the calumny and the persecutions of the wicked; through all these she had preserved intact her tender confidence in Him. It was not enough that she should have been tempted by the splendor of royal majesty, by the flattering homage of a brilliant chivalry, and by the intimate joys and pure happiness of her married life; amid all these she had invariably given the first place in her heart to the thought of heaven, whilst the first care of her life was relieving the miseries of her abandoned and suffering fellow beings. All this still fell short of the demand of divine love; it was necessary, before entering into possession of celestial joys, that she who had alleviated so many miseries should in turn become herself the most miserable and abandoned of creatures; it was necessary, before beholding the treasures of eternal life, that she should die a thousand times every day to the world and to all that a worldly life could give. Thenceforth, to

the last day of her life, unceasing storms were to assail this frail plant; and by a miraculous favor, easily intelligible to the friends of God, instead of being broken, or bent and weighed down to earth, the plant would lift its head again, expanding on all sides, to receive the dew of heaven, and bloom with unparalleled beauty. If the loss of so tender a husband, if the sudden dissolution of a union so holy, plunged this predestined soul for a day into an abyss of despair, other and more cruel trials soon came to restore to her all her strength and calmness and her invincible ardor. If she succumbed for an instant, pierced through and through by the wound of a mortal love, quickly rising she wove completely about her heart a chain of celestial love, which bound her to the throne of the Most High, and which nothing could break or loosen. As she approached the end of her career the exaltation of victory was in some sort to take the place of the tranquil courage of her previous struggles; she was to have the presentiment and the instinct of triumph.

CHAPTER XVIII

Dear St. Elizabeth is driven from her Castle with her Little Children and reduced to Extreme Misery; the Great Ingratitude and Cruelty of Men towards her

Vidi lacrymas innocentium; et neminem consolatorem.
Eccl. IV, I.

Paupercula, tempestate convulsa, absque ulla consolatione.
Is. LIV, 11.

Egentes, angustiati, afflicti, quibus dignus non erat mundus. . . .
Hebr. XI, 37, 38.

In beginning this second part of the life of Elizabeth, with her twentieth year, I cannot help admonishing the few readers who may have followed me thus far that they will find in the remaining pages an absence of what little purely human attraction, or romantic feature, they may have found in those which have preceded. It will no longer be the young and naïve wife, seeking to combine, in the innocent tenderness of her soul, the worship of her Heavenly Father with the sweetest affections of life; it will be the penitent, given up to all the stern realities of an ascetic life, pressing on beyond the ordinary paths of piety followed by the faithful, eradicating from her life and expelling from her heart whatever could have found a place there by the side of her God; it will be the Christian widow, raised to the highest plane of her power, stripped more and more of herself, and reaching at last a degree of self-abnegation and spiritual mortification intensely repugnant to the mind and heart, as nature has given

them to us, and which, to be understood and appreciated, requires all the strength and all the fervor of unhesitating faith.

The compassion which, as we have seen, was felt for the young widow during the first hours of her grief was not to be of long duration, nor efficacious. Little time elapsed before persecution and ingratitude came to add all their bitterness to the sorrow which filled her heart. While she was wholly absorbed by this sorrow, and kept aloof from the cares of government which had devolved upon her in consequence of the death of her husband and the minority of her son, who was still a child, ancient enmities were awakened against her, and this favorable opportunity was seized upon to oppress her who had just been stricken by heaven, and to embitter the wound that God had inflicted upon her. The Duke Louis had, as we have seen, two younger brothers, Henry and Conrad; these young princes had allowed themselves to be surrounded by men who were strangers to every sentiment of justice and honor. These iniquitous counsellors endeavored especially to seduce the Landgrave Henry, surnamed Raspe, and to engage him, in behalf of his own interests, in a base conspiracy against his sister-in-law. They represented to him that, according to the ancient law of the country of Thuringia, the entire principality ought to remain indivisible in the hands of the oldest prince of the reigning family, who alone should marry; that if the younger members wished to take wives, they could at most obtain, as their appanage, a few provinces, and would descend to the rank of counts, remaining always vassals to their elder brother; and that consequently it was of the greatest importance for him, Henry, to take possession at once of the sovereign authority and the rights of the senior member of the house, setting aside the Duke Louis' son, Hermann, and to marry himself, in order that the country might remain in possession of

his children. They did not dare, as it would seem, to advise him to attempt the life of the legitimate heir, but they urged him to expel his brother's widow and all her children, including the little Hermann, not only from the ducal residence of Wartburg, but likewise from Eisenach and from all the other ducal territories. If by chance, they added, this child should live, he would be only too happy, on becoming of age, to receive from his uncle one or two castles as his whole portion. In the meantime it was important to get him out of the way at once, and for that purpose to banish his mother, the prodigal and bigoted Elizabeth.[1]

The Duke Henry unfortunately allowed himself to be won over by these dastardly counsels. Justice and honor, says the old poet, fled from his heart, and he declared war against the widow and the orphan whom he had sworn to protect. His younger brother, Conrad, yielded to the same advice; and treacherous courtiers, with the consent of both the brothers, went to Elizabeth to make known to her the will of her new master. They found her with her mother-in-law, Sophia, who had been drawn to her by their common sorrow. They began by heaping injuries upon her, reproached her with having ruined the country, wasted and exhausted the treasures of the State, deceived and dishonored her husband, and announced to her that as a punishment for her crimes she was stripped of all her possessions, and that the Duke Henry, now sovereign, ordered her to leave the castle immediately. Elizabeth, astonished by these insults and by this message, endeavored to move these rude enemies, and humbly besought them to grant her a little delay. The Duchess Sophia, shocked by such brutality, took her daughter-in-law in her arms, and exclaimed, "She shall remain with me! No one shall take her from me! Where are my sons?

[1] Leg. Aurea.

I want to speak to them." But the emissaries replied, "No; she must leave here instantly"; and undertook to separate the two princesses by force. Seeing that all resistance was vain, Sophia wished at least to accompany poor Elizabeth as far as the outer gate of the castle. The dethroned sovereign was not permitted the privilege of taking anything whatsoever with her; but in the court she found her little children and two of her maids of honor, who were to be expelled at the same time, and to whom we are indebted for an account of this sad scene. When they reached the gate of the castle, the Duchess Sophia again embraced Elizabeth, shedding many tears, and could not make up her mind to part with her. The sight of the children of the son whom she had lost, of these orphans condemned to share the fate of their innocent mother, intensified the affliction and indignation of their grandmother. She again asked most earnestly to see her sons, Henry and Conrad, persuaded that they would not resist her supplications. But she was told that they were not there; and in fact they had concealed themselves during the execution of their orders, and had not dared to confront the prayers of their mother, nor the sight of the misfortunes to which they had condemned their sister-in-law. At length, after having mingled her tears with those of Elizabeth, whom she had held all the time in her arms, Sophia, whose sorrow over the death of her son, says a narrator, was renewed to its fullest extent, and augmented by the shame which she felt at the treason of her surviving children, Sophia permitted her daughter-in-law to depart, giving way to the most violent grief. The gates of the castle, where the young Duchess had reigned so many years, were closed behind her. In that court, from which in truth the noblest knights had gone to reclaim the tomb of Christ, no one was found to discharge the first duty of chivalry, and to offer an asylum or assistance to the widow and

the orphans. The daughter of kings descended alone on foot, in tears, the rough and steep road which led to the city. She carried in her own arms the child to which she had just given birth; the others were led by the maids of honor who followed her.[1] It was midwinter,[2] and the cold was very severe. On their arrival at the foot of the mountain of Wartburg, entering the city of Eisenach, which she had, as it were, inundated with her charity, she found the hearts of people no less unmerciful. In fact, the Duke Henry had proclaimed throughout the city that whoever should receive Elizabeth and her children would incur his very great displeasure; and with an ingratitude still more revolting than the cruelty of this order, all the inhabitants of Eisenach obeyed it. The desire to please the new master, perhaps also that consciousness of benefits received which weighs so heavily upon mean souls, overrode all the laws of humanity, kindness, and justice. It was in vain that the unfortunate Princess, surrounded by her four little children, went about weeping, knocking at every door, and at those especially of the people who had previously shown the greatest affection for her; she was nowhere admitted. At last she came to a miserable tavern, from which the landlord could not or would not drive her away; for she declared that this place was common to every one, and she wished to stop there. "Everything that I had has been taken from me," she said, still weeping; "nothing is left me but to pray to God!" The landlord assigned to her and her companions, as a shelter for the night, a hovel in which his household utensils were kept, and in which his hogs were stabled. He turned them out to give place to the Duchess of Thuringia, to the Royal Princess of Hungary. But, as if this last degree of humiliation had suddenly brought back tranquillity to her soul,

[1] The old paintings of Marburg represent her thus.

[2] The beginning of the year 1228.

she no sooner found herself alone in this dirty habitation than her tears were dried, and a supernatural joy came over her and penetrated her whole being. She remained in this state till midnight, when she heard the bell ringing for Matins at the Franciscan convent which she herself had founded during her husband's life. She immediately went to their church, and after having assisted at the office, she begged them to chant the *Te Deum*, to render thanks to God for the great tribulations which He had sent her.[1] Her ardent piety, her absolute submission to the Divine Will, the holy joy of a Christian soul whom her Heavenly Father deigned to try, and her old love of evangelical poverty took complete possession of her then, never afterwards to leave her. Prostrate at the foot of the altar, whilst amid the darkness of this sad night that song of gladness, so incomprehensible to the world, was wafted to heaven, she edified her faithful attendants by the fervor and humility with which her soul was poured forth to God. She thanked Him, in a loud voice, that now she was poor and despoiled of everything, as He Himself had been in the crib of Bethlehem. "Lord," she said, "let Thy will be done! Yesterday I was a duchess, with a rich and grand castle; to-day behold me a beggar, and no one willing to shelter me. Lord, if I had served Thee better whilst I was a sovereign; if I had bestowed more alms for the love of Thee, I might now rejoice; unfortunately it was not so!" But soon the sight of her poor children, suffering from hunger and cold, awakened fresh sorrow in her tender heart. "I have deserved to see them suffer thus, and repent bitterly for it! . . . My children were born princes and princesses, and now they are starving and have not so much as a bed of straw to lie upon! My heart is pierced

[1] This convent was situated on the spot now occupied by the ancient Palace of the Dukes, the bell-tower, and the garden of Charlottenburg in the public square of Eisenach.

with anguish for their sake; as for me, Thou knowest, O my God! that I am unworthy to be chosen by Thee to receive the grace of poverty!"

She remained seated in this church, surrounded by her children and attendants, during the rest of the night and a part of the following day. The intensity of the cold and hunger, however, of which her children were complaining, compelled her to leave, and to go and beg for lodging and for something to eat. She wandered about a long time in vain in that city where so many men had been fed, cared for, healed, and enriched by her. Finally a priest, himself very poor, had compassion upon this saintly and royal misery, and braving the anger of the Landgrave Henry, he offered to share his humble lodging with the widow and children of his dead sovereign. Elizabeth accepted this charity with gratitude, and he prepared for them beds of straw, offering such hospitality as his poverty permitted; but in order to obtain a little wretched nourishment for her children and herself, she was obliged to pawn some jewels which she doubtless had on at the time of her expulsion from Wartburg. In the meantime her persecutors, having learned that she had found shelter, persevering in their implacable hostility, served her with an order to go and lodge at the house of one of the lords of the court, who had shown the greatest hostility towards her, and who possessed a magnificent residence in Eisenach, with extensive surrounding buildings. This man had the effrontery to assign a contracted little apartment to the Duchess, in which he shut her up with her whole family, treating her with disgusting rudeness, and refusing her nourishment of any kind, or even means of warming herself; and his wife and servants imitated his example. Elizabeth spent the night in this wretched place, distressed constantly by the sight of the sufferings of her children, who were tormented

with hunger and by the severe cold weather. The following morning, as she did not wish to remain any longer in this inhospitable lodging, she went away, saying, "I thank you, O walls! that you have protected me during the night as much as you could from the wind and rain. I wish from the bottom of my heart that I could thank your owners, but really I know not for what."

She made her way again to the vile retreat which she had found the previous night at the tavern; that was the only place that her enemies did not begrudge her. She spent the greater part of the day, and even of the nights, in the churches. "From there, at least, no one will dare to drive me," she said, "for they are God's and God alone is my host." But the misery to which she was reduced brought upon her another sacrifice more bitter to her heart than any of the others. She who had befriended and cared for so many orphans, so many poor abandoned children, whose delight it had been to pour out the treasures of her mercy upon them even more generously than upon any other class of the poor, who had been so tender a mother to them, she was now to see herself forced to part with her own children, that they might not be condemned, at their young age, to undergo destitution and misery with her; she had to deprive herself of this last human consolation. Some trustworthy people, whose name history does not tell us, having heard of the condition to which she was reduced, offered to take charge of her children, and she had no alternative but to accept the offer, or to see them exposed every day to want for food which she had no means of providing for them. But that which especially determined her to make the separation, says a contemporaneous historian, was the fear of being led to sin against the love of God, by the sight of the sufferings of these little ones so precious to her; for, he adds, she loved her children to excess. They were there-

fore taken away and concealed separately at distant points. Relieved of anxiety concerning their condition, she became more resigned to her own. Having pawned every article she had of value, she sought to earn her frugal living by spinning. Although reduced herself to such abject misery, she could not accustom herself to not relieving the wants of others, and she would deprive herself of some portion of her own wretched meals, in order to bestow some alms upon the poor whom she met.

Such heroic patience, such invincible meekness, seemed to have calmed the fury of her powerful persecutors, but failed to inspire the hearts of the inhabitants of Eisenach with pity or gratitude. We find no instance of compassion or sympathy on their part in the detailed accounts which have been preserved of these pathetic circumstances. On the contrary, they seem to have demonstrated how true it is that ingratitude, like all base inclinations of the human soul, can silence its memories and its remorse only by adding new excesses to previous ill-deeds. There was at that time, among others, in Eisenach, an old beggar, afflicted with many grievous infirmities, who had for a long time been the recipient of the charity and the assiduous and attentive care of the Duchess, now herself a beggar. One day as she was crossing a muddy stream, which still runs through one of the streets of Eisenach,[1] into which some stepping-stones had been thrown to facilitate the crossing, she met this same old man, who, approaching at the same time that she did to step onto the stones, would not make way for her, but jostling rudely against the young and feeble woman, caused her to fall full length into this filthy water. Then adding derision to this brutal ingratitude, the old man cried out at

[1] In the old historians this stream is called Rivus Coriarorum, and at the present time, under the name of Löbersbach, is made use of by the curriers and dyers.

her, "Now see yourself! You would not live like a Duchess when you were one; now you are poor and stretched in the mud, and I am not going to help you out." Elizabeth, always patient and gentle, got up as best she could, and laughed heartily at her own fall, saying, "So much for the gold and precious stones I used to wear." Then, says her historian, full of resignation and unmingled joy, she went to wash her soiled garments in some water nearby, and her patient soul in the blood of the Lamb.[1]

At this point in her history, a sincere and devout religious, whom I have already quoted, exclaims with a tender compassion, "O my poor, dear St. Elizabeth! I suffer in your miseries far more than you did; my indignation is justly aroused against these ungrateful and hard-hearted men far more than yours was. Oh! if I had only been there, how I would have welcomed you, you and yours, with all my heart! With how much love would I not have cared for you and provided for all your wants! May my good will at least be agreeable to you, and when that dreaded day shall come when I shall have to stand alone, and abandoned by all the world, before God, vouchsafe to come to meet me, and receive me into everlasting tabernacles."[2]

[1] This incident, carefully preserved by popular tradition, seems to have made an impression even upon Protestant posterity. In fact, in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, a column was erected at the very spot where the Saint had fallen in the stream, with two long and ridiculous inscriptions in a classic style, in which the poor Saint is compared to the graces!

Tres inter Divas Charites, nymphasque sorores
En! quartum tenet hoc Elisabetha locum, etc.

This column was still standing in 1783.

[2] P. Martinus à Kochem.

CHAPTER XIX

The Most Merciful Jesus consoles Dear St. Elizabeth in her Misery and Destitution; the Most Sweet and Clement Virgin Mary comes to instruct and to fortify her

Ego, ego ipse consolabor vos. . . .
Is. LI, 12.

Et absterget Deus omnem lacrymam ab oculis eorum.
Apoc. VII, 17.

In the midst of so many tribulations, Elizabeth did not for a moment forget that it was the hand of God that sent them to her; and her heart was never moved to murmur or complain. On the contrary, wholly given up to prayer, and to all the pious practices which the Church, with so much maternal generosity, offers to afflicted souls, she unceasingly sought therein her Saviour, and she was not slow in finding Him. He came with all the tenderness of a father, ready to transform all the trials which she had so nobly accepted into ineffable consolations.

He Who promised His elect *that He would wipe away all tears from their eyes*[1] could not forget His humble servant, prostrated before Him under the weight of all the sorrows that could overwhelm a mortal soul. Not only did He wipe away her tears, but He opened her eyes, and permitted her to cast her looks ahead into the regions of eternal light, where her place was already marked out. Whilst she prayed night and day at the foot of the altars, happy visions, frequent revelations of celestial glory and mercy,

[1] Apoc. vii, 17.

came to reanimate and refresh her soul. Ysentrude, the best loved of her maids of honor, who never left her, and who desired to share her misery after having shared her splendor, related to the ecclesiastical judges all that she remembered of these miraculous consolations. She often noticed that her mistress entered into a sort of ecstasy which she could not at first account for. One day especially, during Lent, when the Duchess was on her knees in church assisting at Mass, she suddenly fell over against the wall, and for a long time remained as though absorbed and raised above all earthly life, her eyes immovably fixed upon the altar until after the communion. When she recovered her natural state, her face wore an expression of supreme happiness. Ysentrude, who had observed all her movements, availed herself of the first opportunity to beg her to reveal the vision which she doubtless had had. Elizabeth, radiant with joy, replied, "I have no right to make known to any one what God has deigned to reveal to me; but I will not conceal from you that my spirit has been inundated with the sweetest joy, and that the Lord has permitted me to see with the eyes of my soul wonderful secrets."

After the last blessing she returned to her wretched abode and partook of a very light collation. Then, feeling herself overcome with weakness and fatigue, she lay down upon a bench in front of her window, and rested her head upon the breast of her beloved and faithful Ysentrude. The latter thought that the Duchess was ill and wanted to sleep; but while resting in this position, her eyes were open and her looks fixed upon heaven. Soon Ysentrude noticed that her face became animated; a celestial serenity, a profound and supreme joy, were depicted there; a sweet and tender smile passed over her lips. But a moment afterwards her eyes closed and were suffused with tears; then they opened again; the look of joy and the smile

reappeared, to give way again to tears; and thus she remained until the hour of Compline, her head resting all the time upon the heart of her friend, and her face wearing alternately an expression of joy and of sorrow, but most of the time one of great joy. Towards the end of this silent ecstasy, she cried out in accents of ineffable sweetness, "Yes, indeed, my Lord, if Thou wishest to be with me, I wish to be with Thee and never to be separated from Thee." A moment later she awoke, and Ysentrude besought her to tell why she had thus smiled and wept alternately, and to explain the meaning of the words she had uttered. Elizabeth, always full of humility, endeavored again to remain silent regarding the graces which she had received from God. Finally, yielding to the solicitation of one who loved her so faithfully and well, and who had so long been dear to her, she said, "I saw the heavens open, and my Lord, the most merciful Jesus, deigned to look down upon me, and to console me in all the tribulations by which I am oppressed. He spoke to me with ineffable tenderness, and called me His sister and His friend. He permitted me to see His dear mother, Mary, and His beloved Apostle St. John, who was with Him. My joy at seeing my Saviour must have caused me to smile; sometimes He turned His face from me as though He would retire, and then I wept because I was unworthy to see Him any longer. But He, pitying me, turned once again His divine looks upon me, and said, *Elizabeth, if thou wish to be with me, I wish indeed always to be with thee, and never to be separated from thee.* And I replied, Yes, Lord, I wish to be with Thee, never to be separated from Thee, either in good fortune or adversity." And from that time these divine words were written upon her heart in characters of fire, and illumined her soul with a celestial splendor. In this sacred compact, in this intimate union with Jesus, the God of peace, the Father of the poor and the unfortunate, she

could see, as it were, the termination of her widowhood, and a new and indissoluble betrothal with an immortal Spouse.

Nor was this the only time that this divine Spouse manifested to her, in a sensible manner, His tender and watchful solicitude. One day, when she had been exposed to an affront on the part of her persecutors, the nature of which is unknown to us, but so cruel that her soul, ordinarily so patient, was overwhelmed by it, she sought relief in prayer.

She began to pray earnestly, amid many tears, for all who had insulted her, begging God to confer upon them a blessing for every injury she had received from them. As she became weary from praying thus, she heard a voice, which said to her, "Thou hast never uttered a prayer so pleasing to Me as these; they have penetrated to the depths of My heart. Therefore I pardon all the sins that thou hast ever committed in thy life." And the voice then enumerated to her all her sins, saying, "I pardon thee such and such a sin." Elizabeth cried out in astonishment, "Who art thou that speakest thus to me?" To which the same voice replied, "I am He at whose feet Mary Magdalen came to kneel in the house of Simon the leper."

Some time afterwards, as she was lamenting the fact that her ordinary confessor was not near her, our Lord designated as her confessor the Saint whom she had especially chosen in her childhood, and whom she had always loved so tenderly, St. John the Evangelist. The apostle of love appeared to her; she made her confession to him with a more perfect recollection of her faults, she said, and with greater humility of heart, than she had ever experienced at the feet of any priest. He gave her a penance, and addressed to her an exhortation so full of tenderness, and so efficacious, that her bodily ills seemed to her relieved thereby, as well as the wounds of her soul.

It was, moreover, permitted her, in her frequent and vivid contemplations, to penetrate into the smallest details of the dolorous passion of our Lord. Once, for instance, when she was praying fervently, she had an interior vision of a hand opening before her, resplendent with whiteness and light, but extremely emaciated, with fingers long and slender, and having a deep wound in the middle of the palm. She recognized from this last sign that it was the hand of Christ, and she was surprised that it was so thin and emaciated. A voice which she knew answered her at once, "That is because I was exhausted at night by vigils and prayers, and during the day by journeying from city to city, and through the country, to preach the kingdom of God." Again she saw the dark and thick blood which had flowed from the transfixed side of the crucified Jesus, and she was surprised that it was not more liquid and clear. The same voice replied to her that that was the result of the breaking of all the divine members, and of the awful sufferings which the Son of God had endured during the suspension of His body on the Cross.

All these miraculous visions excited in the tender heart of Elizabeth an intense grief for her sins, the expiation of which had cost the sovereign Victim so much suffering. As she was one day weeping bitterly over this thought, her divine Comforter appeared and said to her, "Do not distress thyself, my dear daughter, for all thy sins are forgiven thee. I was punished for them in every member and every part, through which thou mayst have offended thy Creator. Know that thou art free from all sin." "If I am thus sanctified," Elizabeth then replied, "why can I not cease from offending Thee?" "I have not so sanctified thee," was the answer, "that thou canst not sin, but I have given thee the grace so to love Me that thou wouldst rather die than sin."

And yet the delicate and humble soul of Elizabeth, far from assuming great confidence from these signal favors of her God, seemed on the contrary only to have found therein an additional motive for despising herself, for mistrusting her own strength, and for exaggerating her unworthiness in her own eyes. Whilst she scorned the exterior trials and the cruel persecutions, to which she had recently been subjected, she found in herself, in the scruples and fears of her humility, an abundant source of bitterness.

But the God to Whom she had made the exclusive gift of her life and her heart watched over this treasure at all times; and as if He wished her to taste successively all the consolations which are the portion of the children of election, as if He wished to draw her and to unite her to Himself by the sweetest and at the same time the strongest bonds, He charged her whom we daily address as the Health of the sick, Refuge of sinners, and Comforter of the afflicted, to heal this young, languishing soul, sick and distressed from excess of love, whom even this excess led into faults against hope and faith. The Queen of Heaven became thenceforth the medium of all the graces and all the light which her divine Son wished to pour forth upon the soul of the spouse whom He had reserved for Himself from the hour of her birth.

Mary manifested the same condescension towards Elizabeth that she did towards St. Bridget and other saints illustrious in the memory of Christians; she often appeared to her, to instruct, to enlighten, and to strengthen her in the way in which God wished her to walk. She whom the Church always calls *Mother, Sovereign, guide, and mistress of all men*,[1] did not disdain to guide each

[1] Patrocinio Virginis sanctissimae implorato, quae omnium mater est, domina, dux et magistra. — Brief of Gregory XVI to the Bishop of Rennes, Oct. 5, 1833.

step of this young and humble friend of her Son. The detailed tradition of these sacred interviews, gathered from the accounts of Elizabeth herself, has been preserved for Catholic posterity in the annals of the Order of St. Francis, and especially in the invaluable documents accumulated by the learned Jesuits of Belgium, in compiling their collection of the *Acts of the Saints.*[1] Thanks to these precious records, we are permitted to admire at a distance the sweet familiarity and the maternal solicitude with which Mary entered into all the emotions and all the perplexities which agitated the tender and over-scrupulous heart of Elizabeth, and the assistance she rendered her in these interior struggles, so frequent among all predestined souls. Nor shall I hesitate to introduce these touching narratives here, though I must necessarily abridge them, with all the confidence and pious admiration which they ought to inspire in every truly Catholic heart.

Nothing could surpass the sweet clemency which

[1] The printed works of the Bollandists stop, as is known, on the 15th of October; but they have prepared and arranged in proper order a great number of extracts and documents bearing on the history of the saints of all the other days of the year. This collection is now found in the Library of Burgundy at Brussels. Those relative to St. Elizabeth, gathered by the fathers, who travelled *ad hoc*, among the different convents of Germany, at the close of the seventeenth century, occupy two thirds of a folio volume of different articles devoted to the saints of the 19th of November. The passages which I shall quote are found under the following title: *Revelationes beatae Mariae factae Elisabeth filiae regis Hungariae.* A note which I was unable to decipher indicates the name of the convent where this manuscript was found; but a comparison of the handwriting leads me to believe that it was copied and sent by F. Wilman, who transmitted many other articles of the same volume, from Wetzlar and the surrounding country, where he was in 1696. Mr. Staedtler, in his German translation of my history, has given these revelations complete. He believes that they were drawn up by Marianus Florentinus, a Franciscan chronicler, who died in 1523, and who was quoted in this matter by Wadding. *Ann. Minorum.*

characterized the beginning of these celestial communications. One day, as the afflicted widow sought interiorly her Dearly Beloved with fervor and anxiety, without being able to find Him, she was led to reflect upon the cause of the flight of Jesus into Egypt, and she conceived an ardent desire to be instructed upon the subject by some holy monk. Suddenly the Blessed Virgin appeared and said to her, "If you wish to be my scholar, I will be your teacher; if you wish to be my servant, I will be your mistress." Elizabeth, not daring to believe herself worthy of such honor, said, "Who are you, who ask me to become your scholar and servant?" Mary replied, "I am the mother of the living God, and I say to you, there is no monk who can instruct you in that subject better than I can." At these words, Elizabeth joined her hands and extended them towards the Mother of Mercy, who took them in her own and said, "If you wish to be my daughter, I will be your mother, and when you are well instructed and obedient as a good scholar, a faithful servant, and devoted daughter, I will place you in the hands of my Son. Avoid all discussions, and close your ears to all injuries that may be uttered against you. Remember that my Son fled into Egypt to escape the snares of Herod." So extraordinary a favor, however, was not sufficient to afford perfect tranquillity to Elizabeth; her distrust of herself only increased; but the Mother who had so generously adopted her would never abandon her. On the Feast of St. Agatha (February 5), as she was weeping bitterly over her disobedience to the instructions of her divine mistress, that sweet consoler suddenly appeared at her side and said to her, "O my daughter, why this violent grief? I did not choose you as my daughter to cause you so much trouble; do not despair because you have not fully observed my precepts. I knew well beforehand that you would fail therein. Repeat once my salutation, and this offence will be wholly forgiven."

Some days afterwards, on the Feast of St. Scholastica (February 10), Elizabeth was weeping again, sobbing violently. Her indefatigable consoler appeared to her, accompanied this time by St. John the Evangelist, the special friend and patron of Elizabeth's childhood. "You chose me," Mary said to her, "as your mistress and your mother, and you gave yourself to me; but I want this choice on your part to be publicly confirmed, and that is why I have brought with me my beloved John." Elizabeth then joined her hands again, and placed them between those of the Queen of Heaven, as a vassal between those of her sovereign, and said to her, "Do with me, my Lady, whatsoever you will, as your servant." Then she confirmed this dedication herself by a solemn oath, in the presence of St. John.

One night, while Elizabeth was reciting the angelic salutation, she to whom this blessed prayer was addressed appeared to her and said, among other things, "I want to teach you all the prayers which I said while I was in the temple. . . . I asked God especially to grant me the grace to love Him and to detest my enemy. There can be no virtue without this absolute love of God, by which the plenitude of grace descends upon the soul; but having descended there, it does not remain, it passes away like running water, unless the soul detests her enemies, that is to say, sin and vice. He, therefore, Who knows how to preserve this heavenly grace should know how to make a proper disposition of this love and hatred, side by side, in His heart. I want you to do all that I did. I rose every night at midnight, and going before the altar, prostrated myself there and besought God to enable me to observe all the precepts of His law, and begged Him to grant me the graces of which I stood in need, in order to be pleasing to Him. I prayed especially that I might see the time when that most holy virgin should live who was to be the mother of His Son, in order that I might consecrate my

whole being to her service and veneration." Elizabeth interrupted her by saying, "O sweet Lady, were you not already then full of grace and virtue?" But the Blessed Virgin replied, "I assure you I believed myself to be as sinful and wretched as you think yourself; and for that reason I asked God to grant me His grace."

"The Lord did with me," continued the Blessed Mother, "as the musician does with his harp when he adjusts and attunes all the chords thereof, so that they may produce an agreeable and harmonious sound, and then plays on it while he sings. It was thus that God made my soul, my heart, my spirit, and all my senses to accord with His own good pleasure. Guided thus by His wisdom, I was often transported to the very bosom of God by His angels, and there I tasted so much joy and sweetness and consolation that I ceased to remember that I had ever lived in this world. I was, moreover, so familiar with God and the angels that it seemed to me that I had always lived in this glorious court. Then when it pleased God the Father, the angels carried me back to where I had been saying my prayers. When I had returned to earth, and recalled where I had been, this remembrance inflamed my heart with such a love of God that I embraced the earth, the rocks and trees, and all created things, through my affection for their Creator. I wanted to be the servant of all the holy women who dwelt in the temple; I longed to be subject to all creatures, out of love for the Eternal Father; and this happened to me constantly. You should do the same. But you always argue thus, *Why are such favors given me, when I am unworthy to receive them?* And then you fall into a sort of despair, and do not have faith in the blessings of God. Be careful not to talk thus, for it displeases God greatly. He can give His blessing, as a good master, to whomsoever He will, and as a wise father, He knows for whom they are expedient. And now,"

said her divine instructress in conclusion, "I have come to you by a special grace; I am given to you for this night; question me in all confidence; I will answer everything." Elizabeth at first did not dare to avail herself of this privilege; but Mary, having urged her a second time, she ventured to ask this question: "Tell me then, dear Lady, why did you have such an ardent desire to see the virgin who was to become the mother of the Son of God?" Then the Blessed Virgin related to her how, in seeking to console herself for the absence of those supernatural graces of which she had just spoken, she had been led to this idea by the reading of the prophets; how she had resolved to consecrate her virginity to God, that she might be more worthy to serve this predestined virgin; and how finally God had revealed to her that this virgin was none other than herself.

Some time afterwards, as Elizabeth was praying fervently, her tender mother appeared again to her and said, "My child, you think that I possessed all these graces without pain, but it was not so. I assure you, indeed, that I did not receive a single one of these graces from God without a great deal of pain, without constant prayer, an ardent desire, profound devotion, and many tears and trials. It is certain that no grace descends upon the soul without prayer and bodily mortification. When we have given to God what we can of ourselves, however little that be, He comes Himself into our soul, bearing with Him those supreme gifts which in a manner cause us to feel our own weakness and to lose the memory of anything we may have done pleasing to God. Our soul then becomes more vile and contemptible than ever in our own eyes. And what should the soul do then? Devoutly render thanks to God for these favors. When God sees the soul filled with humility and gratitude, He promises her rewards so great that they surpass all the secret

aspirations she has conceived. That is what He did when He sent His Archangel Gabriel to me. What did I do then? I prostrated myself on my knees, and folding my hands I said, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word.* Then God gave me His son and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. And do you know why? Because I had believed in Him, and had humbled myself before Him. I tell you these things, my child, because I wish you to correct your want of faith and hope. When the Lord makes you a promise, say with me, *Behold the handmaid*, etc., and persevere in a firm faith and expectation of this promise, until it is accomplished; and if it is not to be realized, say to yourself that you have committed some fault against God, by which you have ceased to merit what was promised you."

During the vigil of Christmas, Elizabeth besought our Lord to grant her the grace to love Him with all her heart. The Blessed Virgin again appeared to her and asked her, "Who loves God? Do you love Him?" The humble Elizabeth did not dare to answer in the affirmative, and did not wish to in the negative. Whilst she was hesitating as to what to reply, Mary continued, "Shall I tell you who loves Him? The blessed Bartholomew loved Him, the blessed John, and the blessed Lawrence loved Him; are you willing, like them, to allow yourself to be flayed and burned alive?"

Elizabeth still remained silent, and Mary went on: "If indeed you will consent to be stripped of all that is dear to you, all that is precious or pleasing, even of your own self, I will obtain for you the same merit that Bartholomew had when he was stripped of his skin. If you will bear patiently with injuries, you will obtain the same merit that Lawrence did when he was burned; if you make no reply to reproaches and injuries, you will have the same merit as John did when they sought to poison him.

And in all this I will be present to aid and strengthen you."

One day that Elizabeth was thinking about all these prayers which the Blessed Virgin told her she had said in the temple, and asking herself why this immaculate soul had prayed for graces which she already possessed, Mary came and answered her herself, with infinite sweetness and unrestrained familiarity. "I did," she said, "like a man who wishes to construct a beautiful fountain. He goes to the foot of the mountain and examines carefully where the springs are; he digs until he has found them, and then conducts the water to the place where he intends to build his fountain. He cleanses and adorns this place, in order that the water there may remain pure and clear; he surrounds his fountain with a wall; he builds a column, with conduits all around, through which the water may flow freely for the comfort of all.[1] I did in like manner. I went to the mountain when I undertook to study the law. I found the spring when reading and prayer revealed to me that the source of all good is to love God with all our heart. I prepared a site for the fountain when I conceived the desire to love whatsoever He loved. I wanted the water to be clear and pure when I resolved to fly from and to detest sin. I surrounded it with walls when I united inseparably the virtues of humility, patience, and gentleness by the fire of charity, and preserved them thus united to the end of my life. I built the column and constructed the conduits when I became the refuge of all souls; for I am always ready to pour out consola-

[1] Sic ego faciebam. Tunc ivi at montem quando studui discere legem. Tunc venam inveni quando, etc. . . . Tunc muros erexi undique quando virtutes humilitatis, patientiae, benignitatis et mansuetudinis calore charitatis ignitas et conjunctas usque ad vitae exitum inseperabiliter conservavi. . . . Parata sum omnibus pro se vel pro aliis postulantibus subsidium et solatium impertiri gratissime.

tions and graces from on high, in copious streams, upon all who invoke me for themselves or for others. I have revealed to you, my dear child," she said in conclusion, "all the prayers that I made, in order that you may learn from my example to ask from God, with humility and confidence, whatever you may be in need of. Do you know why virtues are not equally distributed among men? Because some do not know how to ask for them with as much humility, nor how to preserve them with as much care as others. For that reason God wishes that those who are deprived of them should be assisted by those who possess them. And I want you to pray with fervor and devotion for your own salvation and for that of others." [1]

After these two interviews, Elizabeth one day saw a magnificent tomb covered with flowers, from which her divine consoler arose and ascended to heaven in the midst of innumerable angels who conducted her to the arms of her Son. An angel came to explain to her this vision of the Assumption, which was granted to her as a favor from heaven, to sustain her in her actual afflictions, and at the same time as a sweet presage of the glory which God reserved for her, as to Mary, if she remained faithful and submissive to His will to the end.

The humble servant of Christ, in relating these miracles, said that she saw and heard them with so near and clear an evidence of their reality that she would rather die than to question their existence.

It was thus that God had already commenced to requite His faithful servant. He gave Himself as a spouse to the desolate widow; to the young woman discouraged and

[1] Propterea, charissima filia, orationes quas ego faciebam tibi revelavi. . . . Scis quare virtutes non sunt aequanimiter datae? Quia nescit una persona, etc. . . . Dico tibi quia volo, te pro tua et aliorum salute orare sollicite et devote.

troubled, He gave as mistress and mother her who is equally the mother of sorrows and of mercies; to the soul whom He had stripped of all earthly possessions, He revealed even in this life the imperishable treasures of heaven.

CHAPTER XX

Elizabeth refuses to marry a Second Time, and consecrates her Nuptial Robe to Jesus, the Spouse of her Soul

Ego dilecto meo, et dilectus meus mihi, qui pascitur inter lilia.
Cant. VI, 2.

The true widow is, in the Church, a little violet of Spring, who exhales an unequalled fragrance by the odor of her sanctity, and keeps herself almost always concealed under the broad leaves of her abjection. . . . She seeks hidden and unfrequented places, not wishing to be occupied by the conversation of worldly people, that she may the better preserve the freshness of her heart against the excitement which might be caused by the desire for wealth, or honors, or even the promptings of passion. — St. Francis of Sales, *Introd.* III, 40.

The sad condition to which a princess so illustrious by birth, and allied to the most powerful houses of the Holy Empire, had been reduced, could not fail to excite the compassion and the intervention of her relatives, as soon as it became known to them. The Duchess Sophia, after having striven in vain to persuade her sons to alleviate poor Elizabeth's lot, made her misfortunes known secretly to her Aunt Matilda, Abbess of Kitzingen, sister of her mother, the Queen of Hungary. This pious princess, penetrated with grief at receiving this information, immediately sent trusty messengers, with two carriages, to find her niece and children, and bring them to the abbey. Elizabeth, happy especially at the thought of being united again with her children, whom she loved so tenderly, accepted her aunt's offer, which her persecutors were undoubtedly afraid to oppose, and proceeded across the deep forests and the

mountains which separated Thuringia from Franconia,[1] to Kitzingen, on the Main. The abbess received her with maternal kindness and with many tears. She assigned her apartments suitable to her rank, and sought to make her forget the cruel sufferings of mind and body which she had undergone. But the young Duchess found no sweeter consolation than that of conforming herself as far as possible to the monastic mode of life, and she often expressed her regret that the care of her children prevented her from conforming absolutely to the rule, like a simple religious. In the meantime Egbert,[2] the Prince-Bishop of Bamberg, a brother of the Abbess Matilda, of the Duchess Hedwiges of Poland, and of the Queen Gertrude, and consequently the maternal uncle of Elizabeth, having learned of her afflictions and of her arrival at Kitzingen, felt that her prolonged stay at that monastery, with her family, was not in accordance with her position, nor with the customs of a religious house, and invited her to come to his diocese. The docile Princess obeyed him, perhaps with regret, leaving to the care of her aunt her second daughter Sophia, scarcely nine years of age, who afterwards took the veil in the abbey which had been the cradle of her infancy. The prelate received his niece in a manner that must have convinced her of his affection for her, and of the respect which her great afflictions inspired in him. He offered to provide her with an escort to Hungary to the King her father; but she declined, probably on account of the sad remembrance of the death of her mother Gertrude. He then assigned to her the castle of Bottenstein[3] as her

[1] This chain is known by the name of *Thuringerwald* and *Roedelgebirge*.

[2] This prelate died in 1235 or 1237. His tomb may be seen in the Cathedral of Bamberg.

[3] Or *Pottenstein*, a castle and borough of the Bishop of Bamberg, on the Putlach, between Forchheim and Bayreuth, in a very mountainous country.

residence, providing her with an establishment suited to her rank, the disposition of which was to be left to her pleasure.[1] She went there with her children and her faithful attendants, Ysentrude and Guta, who had nobly participated in all her trials; and in this quiet retreat they resumed night and day their exercises of piety. But the bishop, seeing that the Duchess was still quite young, being only twenty years of age, and remarkably beautiful, remembering also the precept of St. Paul,[2] conceived the idea of her marrying again. According to several authors, he hoped to procure her marriage with the Emperor Frederick II, who had just lost his second wife, Yolande of Jerusalem. The Emperor himself, we find it stated in a contemporary account, entertained an earnest desire to marry Elizabeth. The bishop went to see her, to communicate this design to her. He told her that he wanted to marry her to a prince far more illustrious and powerful than her deceased husband.

She replied, with great sweetness, that she preferred to remain single during the rest of her life, and to serve God alone. The prelate argued that she was still too young to embrace a life of that kind; he reminded her of the persecutions that she had had to suffer, and suggested to her the possibility of their recurrence when he came to die; for although he had resolved to bequeath Bottenstein and its dependencies to her, after his death he could not protect her from the attacks of the wicked. But Elizabeth did not allow her resolution to be shaken. A French poet has preserved for us her reply. "My Lord," said the beautiful and pious Princess, "I had a husband who loved me tenderly, who was always my loyal friend; I shared

[1] It consisted of two maids of honor, two gentlemen, two chamber maids, and two other servants. Elizabeth protested that her household was too numerous.

[2] I Tim. v, 11.

his honors and his powers; I possessed in abundance the jewels, the riches, and the joys of this world. I had all that; but I have often thought what you yourself are well aware of, that the pleasures of this life are worth nothing. For that reason I wish to quit the world, and to pay to God what I owe Him, the debts of my soul. You know full well that all worldly gratifications lead but to pain and suffering, and the death of the soul. Sire, I long to be in the company of our Lord; I ask of Him but one thing more on this earth; I have two children [1] who will become rich and powerful; I shall be very happy and grateful to God, if He should love me enough to lead them to Himself." The Duchess does not appear to have made known to him at that time the vow of perpetual continence which she had made during the life of her husband, in case she should survive him; but she conversed frequently on the subject with her maids of honor, who had made this vow at the same time that she did, and who feared that the bishop would exert his power to make them violate it. She endeavored to persuade them to take courage, and assured them of her own perseverance at any cost. "I swore," she said, "before God and my revered husband, whilst yet he was living, that I would never give myself to any other man. God who reads our hearts, and discovers our most secret thoughts, knows that I made that vow with a simple and pure heart, and in entire good faith. I trust in His mercy; it cannot be that He will not defend my chastity against all the schemes of men, and even against their violence. It was not a conditional vow, dependent upon the pleasure of my relatives and friends, but a voluntary vow, free and absolute, to consecrate myself wholly, after the death of my beloved, to the glory of my Creator. If, disregarding

[1] She spoke of those who were not destined to the monastic life, her son Hermann and her oldest daughter, Sophia.

the freedom of marriage, they presume to give me to any man whatever, I will protest before the altar; and if I find no other means of escaping, I will secretly cut off my nose, so as to become an object of horror to all men." Nevertheless she was anxious regarding the matter, and the evident determination of the bishop made her feel that she would have a severe struggle to remain faithful to God and to her conscience. She was overwhelmed with sadness, and had recourse to her divine Consoler. Kneeling at His feet, bathed in tears, she besought Him to watch over her and preserve the treasure which she had consecrated to Him. She appealed also to the Queen of Virgins, who had been given to her as her mother. They both deigned to reassure her, and to restore peace to her heart. She soon regained tranquillity of mind and an unbounded confidence in the protection of heaven.

It was undoubtedly at this period of her life that Elizabeth, according to local traditions which are still preserved, made certain journeys, whether for the purpose of escaping the importunities of her uncle, or of gratifying her devotion and pious curiosity. At a time when humanity was not the slave of material interests, that motive, in spite of the difficulties of communication, set more men perhaps in motion than are influenced by the cupidity and ennui of modern travellers.

The poor, the infirm, even women, gratified the desire to pray in some celebrated sanctuary, to venerate the relics of some saint especially dear to them, that they might in their old age recall the sweet memory of some pilgrimage made under the protection of God and His holy angels. Elizabeth thus went twice to Erfurth, a city celebrated for the number and beauty of its religious monuments, and situated in the centre of her husband's dominions, though belonging to the archbishopric of Mentz. She chose as her place of abode, while there,

a convent of penitent women.[1] On going away she left with them the simple glass which she had made use of at her frugal meals, and which is still preserved in veneration at the present day, as a souvenir of her kindness and her humility.[2]

About this time, also, she visited the home of her maternal ancestors, at Andechs, situated on an eminence near the Alps which separate Bavaria from Tyrol. This ancient and famous castle had just been transformed by the Margrave Henry of Istria, another uncle of Elizabeth's, into a Benedictine monastery,[3] which afterwards became famous for the possession of some of the most precious relics of Christendom, and for the numerous miracles connected therewith. Elizabeth came to associate herself, by her presence, with this pious foundation, which was for all time to be an honor to her family. From the summit of the holy mountain she could gaze upon beautiful Bavaria, rich alike, at that time, in the beauties of nature and of religion, studded all over with celebrated monasteries,[4] some of them lying hidden in the ancient forests, others reflected in the pure and still waters of the lakes of that region; all of them centres of the Christian civilization of the country. In succeeding centuries these monasteries were the inviolable sanctuaries of science, and offered a sweet and safe refuge to souls seeking rest and prayer, and

[1] Called the *Ladies in White;* replaced now by the Ursulines. A little chamber is shown there which overlooks the church, and which is believed to have been occupied by her.

[2] On the Feast of our Saint, all the young scholars of the community are permitted to drink from this glass. (June, 1834.)

[3] According to others, a monastery of regular canons of St. Augustine.

[4] Such were Diessen, on the banks of the Ammersee, founded by St. Matilda, of the house of Méran; Wessobrunn, celebrated for the manuscripts that were found in its library; Steingaden, Polting, Rottenbuch, etc.

a boundless hospitality to the numerous pilgrims who followed this route on their way from the kingdoms of the north to the tombs of the Apostles. How often, too, the eyes of Elizabeth must have rested upon that majestic chain of the Tyrolese Alps, beyond which the thoughts of every Catholic heart turn with emotion towards Rome and Italy!

She came to share unknowingly in the veneration which has surrounded these favored places. At her prayers a spring gushed forth at the foot of the mountain, so copious that it never ceases to flow, even in years of the greatest drought, and possessing, moreover, many salutary virtues. The devout Princess also brought with her to this place, which was to pass from under the protection of her family to that of Almighty God, a sweet and beautiful souvenir of her married life, which she came to offer in her simplicity to the new Spouse of her soul. It was her nuptial robe, the garment which she had worn on the day of her marriage with her beloved Louis. She deposited it upon the altar, and at the same time gave to the religious a little silver cross containing some relics of the instruments of the Passion, her *pax*, or the reliquary which she had always worn about her person, and several other objects that were dear to her. A few years were to roll by, and the name of this young widow, who had come as an humble pilgrim to make her offering at this rising sanctuary, would fill the Christian world with her glory, and the hand of the Vicar of God would inscribe it among the Saints of heaven. Need we be surprised if, from that time, the gifts of this Saint, whom for so many good reasons these sacred places might claim as their own, became invaluable relics; and if even at the present time, in spite of the storms and the darkness which prevail, the simple and faithful people come to venerate and to kiss them with respectful love?[1]

[1] The monastery of Andechs, at the time of the secularization of all religious property, by King Maximilian of Bavaria, in 1806, was

sold to a Jew! The church, however, and the treasury of relics, were preserved. The nuptial robe of St. Elizabeth serves as a covering for three miraculous hosts. On the principal feasts of the year, great numbers of pilgrims come there, and the inhabitants of the neighboring villages go in procession, singing litanies. Andechs is about eight leagues from Munich, near the beautiful lake of Staremberg. The heights on which the church is situated command a view of the whole chain of the Tyrolese Alps. Few places in Germany are more worthy of a visit from the Catholic tourist. Those who may be able to go are entreated to remember there before God the author (and the translator) of this book.

CHAPTER XXI

Dear St. Elizabeth receives the Remains of her dearly Loved Husband; Their Burial at Reinhartsbrunn

Benedicti vos Domino, qui fecistis misericordiam hanc cum Domino vestro, et sepelistis eum. — II Kings II, 5.

Requiem tibi dabit Dominus semper, et implebit splendoribus animam tuam, et ossa tua liberabit. — Is. LVIII, 11.

Elizabeth had hardly returned to Bottenstein when a messenger from the bishop arrived, summoning her to come to Bamberg, to receive the remains of her husband, which the Thuringian knights, on their way home from the Crusade, were going to bring there. The companions of Louis, as we have seen, had buried him at Otranto, and then started for Syria, to fulfil their vow. Several of them, who had succeeded in reaching Jerusalem, there offered gifts and prayers for his intention,[1] as he had begged them to do on his deathbed. On returning from their pilgrimage, they came by the way of Otranto, in order to carry back with them the remains of their sovereign. They disinterred them, and found that his bones were as white as snow, which in those days was regarded as a sign that the husband had preserved an inviolable fidelity to his wife. Depositing these precious relics in a rich coffin, they placed them on the back of a horse, and started on their journey homeward. They

[1] Historians go so far as to say that his feast was celebrated there because his sanctity had already been revealed by numerous miracles.

carried a large silver cross, ornamented with precious stones, before the coffin, as a mark of their own piety and of their attachment for their master. In all the cities in which they stopped for the night, they placed the coffin in a church, and had religious, or some devout persons, watch with it, who would spend the whole night singing the vigils of the dead and other prayers. On the following morning they did not take their departure until they had had a Mass said, and had made their offering thereat. However small the church, whether cathedral or conventual, they left there the purple drapery that covered the coffin, that the proceeds thereof might be applied in behalf of the soul of the deceased. No more solemn obsequies had been seen within the memory of any living man.

In this way they passed through the whole of Italy and Southern Germany. When they had arrived within a certain distance of Bamberg, they notified the bishop of their approach, and he at once sent for the Duchess at Bottenstein. At the same time he directed all the lords and dignitaries of his court to prepare to receive her with kindest sympathy, and to gather about her during the sad ceremonies of the following day, for fear that her strength might fail her. He himself then went to meet the body, accompanied by all his clergy, the religious of the different monasteries of the city, and the children of the schools, and followed by an immense throng of people, whose voices mingled with the funeral chant of the priests and the sound of all the bells of the episcopal city. A number of counts and lords of the neighborhood had joined the cortége, which entered the city and bore the remains to the celebrated cathedral where the sacred bodies of the Emperor St. Henry and St. Cunegundes are buried.[1]

[1] This cathedral is still standing, and has recently been restored to all its primitive beauty by the zeal of King Louis of Bavaria.

The office of the dead was celebrated during the entire night.

The next day, Elizabeth, accompanied by her faithful Ysentrude and Guta, was escorted to the cathedral; the coffin was opened, and she was permitted to gaze upon the precious remains of her husband. The grief and the love which filled her heart in that moment, says a pious writer in describing the scene, He alone can know who reads the hearts of all men. All the anguish which she had felt when she first heard of her loss was renewed in her soul; she threw herself upon these bones and kissed them passionately; her grief and agitation were so great that the bishop and the lords who witnessed this sad spectacle felt it their duty to endeavor to calm her and lead her away. But she remembered her God, and at once all her strength returned to her. "I thank Thee, my Lord," she said, "that Thou hast deigned to hear the prayer of Thy servant, and to gratify the intense desire which I had to look upon the remains of my beloved, who was also Thine. I thank Thee for having thus mercifully consoled my afflicted and desolate soul. He offered himself to Thee, and I too had offered him to Thee, for the defence of Thy Holy Land. I do not regret that sacrifice, though I loved him with all my heart. Thou knowest, O my God! how tenderly I loved this husband, who loved Thee so much; Thou knowest that I would have preferred a thousand times, to all the joys of the world, his presence, which was so sweet to me, if Thy goodness had granted it to me; Thou knowest that I would have been willing to spend my whole life in misery and poverty with him, begging from door to door over the whole world, only to have had the happiness of being with him, if Thou hadst permitted it, O my God! Now I give him up, and I give myself up to Thy will. And I would not, even if I could, purchase his life at the cost of a

single hair of my head, unless such were Thy will, O my God!"

This was the last cry of conquered nature, the last sigh of earthly affections expiring in this heart, at the age of twenty, under the yoke of divine love.

Having uttered these words, she dried the torrent of tears that streamed from her eyes, and left the church in silence. She retired to a little grass-grown cloister, adjoining the cathedral, and seating herself, sent an invitation to the Thuringian noblemen who had brought back her husband's body to come and see her there. As they approached, she rose humbly to do them honor, and begged them to be seated near her, as she did not feel strong enough to remain standing. She talked with them very sweetly for a long time; she besought them in the name of God and of Jesus Christ to be the protectors of her poor children, and to act as their guardians; she related to them the cruel and disgraceful treatment to which they, as well as she herself, had been subjected by the Landgraves Henry and Conrad, and the misery which they had been compelled to undergo at Eisenach. The bishop on his part confirmed the statements of his niece, and discussed with the knights the details of the measures to be adopted to repair the wrongs done the widow and orphans of their sovereign. Intense indignation was manifested by the pilgrims when they heard of the injuries which the young Duchess had suffered. They declared that they would always recognize her as their lady and mistress, and that they would defend her before and against all persons whomsoever. At their head they had the noble and faithful Lord Varila, son of him who, sixteen years before, had gone to the palace of the kings of Hungary to ask for the Princess whom they now beheld before them, an oppressed and betrayed widow; he recalled, no doubt, the oath which his father had made to

King Andrew to watch over his daughter. His brothers in arms united with him in beseeching the bishop to confide to them this noble and afflicted family, that they might escort them back to Thuringia at the same time with the mortal remains of Duke Louis. They swore that full and complete justice should be done her. Assured by their promises, and by their renown as brave knights, which could only have been increased by their recent crusade, the bishop consented upon this condition to confide to them her whose defenders they assumed to become. He does not seem to have spoken to them of his project of a second marriage for her. After having celebrated a pontifical Mass himself, in honor of the deceased, and having generously defrayed all the expenses of his guests during their stay at Bamberg, he bid farewell to them, and to the Duchess and her children. The sad cortége resumed their route, and directed their steps toward the abbey of Reinhartsbrunn,[1] where the pious Louis had wished to be buried.

In the meantime the news of the arrival of the remains of the dearly loved sovereign had spread throughout Thuringia, and had created a profound impression everywhere. The Duchess Sophia, Louis' mother, and his brothers Henry and Conrad, hastened to Reinhartsbrunn to meet him; and not only they, but all the counts and lords, the entire nobility of the country, and especially the poor whom that Prince had loved and protected so zealously, made their way there. An immense throng, rich and poor, citizens and peasants, men and women, gathered at Reinhartsbrunn to render the last offices to him whom so short a time before they had seen going forth to meet death, for the honor of God, under foreign skies — a death which he found but too soon; other motives helped to increase the number of this gathering.

[1] In the morning, after having assisted at Mass at daybreak.

The natural desire to see those Crusaders again who had escaped the dangers of the expedition brought thither many who had relatives or friends among them. Moreover, the interest which was everywhere felt, at Eisenach and elsewhere, for the Duchess Elizabeth, the accounts of her misfortunes and her exile, which had been reported throughout the country, and the desire to see what would be the fate of this woman, so young and defenceless, brought there many pious and sympathetic souls. Many bishops and abbots, too, had come to honor the noble champion of the Church and of the Holy Sepulchre. Those same monks whom he had bade farewell with so much affection, and with presentiments which had been but too truly realized, had now the sad duty of rendering him those sacred honors which the Church reserves for her dutiful children. They went to meet his body, followed by many of the secular clergy, and by all the people singing psalms and canticles, which were frequently interrupted by their tears. The obsequies were celebrated in the church of the abbey, in the presence of the two Duchesses and the two Landgraves. A common and equally sincere grief reunited them as they met there before the remains of Louis. All the magnificence of ecclesiastical ceremonies was displayed, and prolonged during several days; and to these were added the tears and lamentations of the people, the most beautiful of all. Generous offerings to the Church, and liberal alms distributed among the poor, were the last homage rendered to him who so loved the poor and honored the Church. His bones, enclosed in a shrine, were placed in a stone tomb, raised in such a manner as to be exposed to the view of the faithful. They were the object of many pilgrimages. The love of the people and the gratitude of the religious obtained for him the surname of Louis the *Saint*, under which he is known in history, and which was justified by

a great number of miraculous cures that occurred at his tomb and by his invocation.[1] The result was that during nearly three centuries he was the object of popular worship, which, however, has never been confirmed by the authority of the Church. At the present time the Catholic traveller may still see the broken stone of his tomb leaning against a church which is no longer Catholic. In contemplating this last monument to so noble a memory, he cannot but recall with emotion and admiration the thought of one who, if the Church indeed has not numbered him among her Saints, was at least the worthy husband of a Saint.

[1] To the manuscript life of this Prince, by his chaplain, Berthold, which is to be found in the library of Gotha, a long list has been added of the miracles which tradition attributes to him, the last of which are of the fifteenth century. There are even hymns and prayers in his honor.

CHAPTER XXII

The Thuringian Knights oblige the Duke Henry to repent of his Treason, and to do Justice to Dear St. Elizabeth

Aperi os tuum muto, et causis omnium filiorum qui pertranseunt: aperi os tuum, decerne quod justum est, et judica inopem et pauperem.
Prov. XXXI, 8, 9.

As soon as the ceremony of the obsequies was concluded, Lord Varila reminded the knightly Crusaders, who were gathered around the Duchess Elizabeth, of the promise they had made to the Bishop of Bamberg regarding his niece. They withdrew to deliberate upon the subject. "The time has come," said Lord Rudolph, "when we must prove ourselves true to the faith which we pledged with our oaths, to our noble Prince and to our lady Elizabeth, who has already suffered so many afflictions; otherwise I fear the eternal fire of hell will be the reward of our perfidy." All understood this language, for in those times the bravest warriors were not ashamed to be guided by the thought of another life in the accomplishment of the duties of their life here on earth. They resolved therefore with one common voice to address a vigorous remonstrance at once to the Landgrave Henry and his brother, and charged especially with this difficult mission four knights, whose names, says the historian, should be preserved with immortal glory. There was in the first place Lord Varila, the grand cup-bearer, who was to speak in the name of all, as being the most eloquent and the most nearly attached to the

Duchess by his antecedents. With him were Rudolph of Berstetten, Harwig of Herba, and Gaultier of Varila, a relative of Rudolph.[1] Preceded by them, all the knights went to the young Princes, whom they found with their mother, and surrounded them. Lord Varila, turning towards the Duke Henry, addressed him in the following words, which were carefully and very justly recorded in the chronicles of the country:[2]

"My Lord, my friends and your vassals who are here present have besought me to speak to you in their name. We have learned in Franconia, and here in Thuringia, of things so culpable on your part that we have been amazed, and have blushed with shame to think that in our own country, and among our own princes, there could be found so much impiety, so much infidelity, and such a disregard of honor. What have you done, young Prince, and who has given you such counsel? You have driven ignominiously from your castles and from your cities, like a disreputable woman, the wife of your brother, the poor desolate widow, the daughter of an illustrious king, whom you, on the contrary, should have honored and consoled. Disregarding your own good name, you have per-

[1] Mr. Staedtler shows that these two noblemen belonged to the family of Schenk of Vargel.

[2] It is impossible to regard this discourse as one of those imaginary compositions with which ancient writers, and following their example, those of the Renaissance, ornamented their narratives. It is found almost literally the same in three accounts wholly different from each other, — that of Theodoric of Thuringia, that of Rothe, in the Chronicle of Thuringia, p. 1733, and that of the Nita Rhytmica. The most extended version, as well as the most remarkable, as being a general history of the country, and not merely a biography of the Saint, is that of Rothe. It is the one that I have adopted literally, completing it with the two others. It was this one also that M. de Raumer made use of in his excellent history of the Hohenstaufen, Vol. III, p. 581, in which he maintains its authenticity in a convincing manner.

mitted her to become the victim of poverty, and to wander about like a beggar! Whilst your brother offers his life for the love of God, his little orphans, whom you should have defended and cared for with the affection and devotion of a faithful guardian, are cruelly driven away from you, and you force them to separate even from their mother, that they may not die of hunger with her! Is that brotherly affection? Is that what you have learned from your brother, the virtuous Prince, who would not have acted thus with the least of his subjects? No, an ill-bred country man would not have been so inhuman to one of his equals; and you, Prince, have so treated your brother who had gone to offer his life for the love of God! How can we ever trust your fidelity and honor? Knowing as you do, that it is your duty as a knight to protect the widow and the orphan, you yourself heap injury upon the orphans and the widow of your brother. I can only say, such deeds cry to God for vengeance."

The Duchess Sophia, hearing these reproaches, which were but too well merited, addressed to her son, burst into tears. The young Duke, confused and ashamed, hung his head without making any reply. The grand cup-bearer presently continued: "My Lord, what had you to fear from a poor woman, sick, abandoned, and desolate; alone, without friends or allies in this country? What harm would this saintly and virtuous woman have done you, even had she remained mistress of all your castles? What will be said of us now in other countries? What a shame! I blush to think of it. Know that you have offended God, that you have dishonored the whole country of Thuringia, that you have sullied your own good name and that of your noble house; and I fear, indeed, that the anger of God will weigh heavily upon the country unless you do penance before Him, unless you become reconciled with this worthy lady, and restore

to the sons of your brother all that you have taken from them."[1]

The assistants were all astonished at the extreme boldness of the language of the noble knight. But God permitted his words to touch a heart which for a long time had been inaccessible to the inspirations of justice and compassion. The young Prince, who until now had remained silent, burst into tears, and wept for a long time without making any reply. Then he said, "I repent sincerely for what I have done; I will no longer listen to those who counselled me to act thus; restore to me your confidence and your friendship. I will willingly do whatever my sister Elizabeth demands of me, and for that purpose I give you full power to dispose of my life and of all my possessions." "That is right," replied Lord Varila, "and the only way to escape the anger of God." Henry, however, could not help adding, "If my sister Elizabeth possessed the whole of Germany, she would not keep any of it long, for she would give it all away for the love of God." Varila and his companions in arms went at once to report to Elizabeth the result of their remonstrances, and to inform her that her brother-in-law wished to be reconciled with her, and to render justice to her at whatever cost. When they began to speak of the conditions which ought to be imposed upon Henry, she exclaimed, "I do not want any of his castles, or cities, or lands, or anything that could embarrass and distract me; but I should be very grateful to my brother-in-law if he would kindly give me of that which is due me on my dower,

[1] I have given this harangue in full, in order to show what the servility of Christian nobility was in those centuries which both royal and democratic writers have called *feudal barbarism.* They were certainly much behind that monarchical period when the Marshal of Villeroy showed Louis XV, then a child, the people assembled under his windows, saying to him, *My master, all these are yours.*

enough to provide for the expenditures which I would like to make for the salvation of my dearly loved one who is dead, and for my own." The knights then summoned Henry and brought him before Elizabeth. He came accompanied by his mother and his brother Conrad. As he approached, he besought her to pardon him all the wrong he had done her, and declared that he was sincerely sorry, and would make full and faithful amends therefor. Sophia and Conrad added their prayers to his. The only reply Elizabeth made was to throw herself into her brother-in-law's arms and weep. The two brothers and the Duchess Sophia mingled their tears with hers, and the valiant warriors were unable to restrain theirs at the sight of this touching spectacle, and at the memory of the kind and gracious Prince who had been the common link between all the members of this family, and whom they had irretrievably lost.

The rights of his children were equally secured, especially those of the young Landgrave Hermann, his eldest son, and the legitimate heir of the duchies of Thuringia and Hesse, the regency remaining rightfully, during his minority, in the hands of the eldest of his uncles, the Landgrave Henry. These arrangements all being completed, the knightly Crusaders separated to return to their castles, and Elizabeth and her children, accompanied by the Duchess Sophia, her mother-in-law, and the young Dukes, started on their return to Wartburg, from which she had been so shamefully driven.[1]

[1] This was at the close of 1228, or at the commencement of 1229.

CHAPTER XXIII

Dear St. Elizabeth renounces the Life of the World, and retiring to Marburg, takes the Habit of the Glorious St. Francis

Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitae meae: ut videam voluptatem Domini. . . . Quoniam abscondit me in tabernaculo suo. . . . Ps. XXVI, 4, 5.

Pro Francisci chordula,
Mantello, tunicula,
Purpuram deposuit.
Ancient Prose of St. Elizabeth, *Franciscan missal.*

The Duke Henry was faithful to his promise; and during all the time that Elizabeth remained with him, he sought, by his affectionate and considerate treatment of her, to make her forget the injuries which he had previously inflicted upon her. He caused all the honors due to her rank to be paid to her, and left her full liberty for all her exercises of piety and works of charity. She resumed them with the same zeal as of old. To this period has been referred the foundation of the hospital of St. Mary Magdalen, of Gotha, in which she had already interested herself during the life of her husband, and which she accomplished upon recovering her estates.[1] As formerly, her love for the poor filled in her life all the place that was not already occupied by prayer and contemplation. Relieved by her widowhood of the obligation of appearing at feasts and public ceremonies, she likewise avoided all occasions of

[1] This hospital was situated on the *Place du Briel* at Gotha.

presenting herself in the assemblages of the nobles and the festivities of the court, which she knew to be too often the fruit of the oppression and hard labors of the poor. She preferred the humiliation of the poor people of God to the pompous display of the powerful ones of the world, and sought to associate herself as far as possible with the former by voluntary poverty. The spectacle of such a life presented too severe a lesson to worldly souls not to reawaken very soon the animosity of the courtiers and of those unworthy knights who had already so cruelly embittered her childhood and the first years of her widowhood. To revenge themselves for her disregard of riches and pleasures, which they esteemed above all things, they affected to disregard her. They disdained to call upon or to speak to her; and if by chance they met her, they seized the opportunity to insult her, calling her, in a loud tone of voice, *stupid* and *fool*. She bore these outrages with so much meekness, her face reflected so well the tranquillity and happy resignation of her soul, that they thought they would reproach her with having already forgotten her husband's death, and with giving herself up to unseemly joy. "Unfortunate creatures!" says a writer of that day, "they knew not that she possessed that joy which is not given to the impious."

The Duchess Sophia herself seems to have been influenced by these calumnies, and to have expressed her surprise and indignation to her daughter-in-law; but Elizabeth was not disturbed thereby, for God, Who alone was everything to her, read her heart.

There were, however, pious and discreet souls to whom she was known, and who appreciated and admired her humility. Moreover, she received at this time that encouragement which is so precious to a Christian soul, that protection which is so powerful for a friendless woman.

From the eminence of that Holy See, which was always

the sure refuge of the weak and the persecuted, there came words of paternal affection to sustain and to honor her. That same cardinal, Ugolin, whom we saw interposing his friendly offices between our Princess and St. Francis of Assisi, now elevated to the papal throne under the name of Gregory IX, having heard of her misfortunes and of her unshaken fidelity in the ways of God, addressed several letters to her, in which he bestowed upon her every apostolic consolation. He exhorted her, by the example of the Saints and the promises of eternal life, to persevere in continence and patience; he bade her place all her confidence in him, because he would never abandon her while he lived, but would regard her always as his daughter, and from that time would take her person and her possessions under his special protection. He granted her at the same time the privilege of a church and of a cemetery for her hospital of St. Mary Magdalen at Gotha. This loving and watchful father moreover directed Conrad of Marburg, who was still invested with apostolic powers, and who had just returned to Thuringia, to assume absolutely, and more especially than he had yet done, the spiritual direction of the Duchess Elizabeth, and at the same time to defend her against those who might attempt to persecute her.

Whether it was that these exhortations of the common father of the faithful gave new strength to her courage, or that she merely obeyed the marvellous influence of divine grace in her heart, she soon conceived the thought and the earnest desire of leading a more perfect life, a life of closer union with God. Although she had detached herself as much as possible from the splendors and enjoyments of her rank, this did not yet satisfy her ardor; her soul had yet too many points of contact with the world, and that world was distasteful to her. After long reflection upon all the modes of life that she might adopt in order to render herself pleasing to God, and hesitation between the

various monastic rules which existed at that period and the solitary life of a recluse, the memory of the example of the glorious Seraph of Assisi, whose daughter she was already as a penitent of the Third Order, prevailed in her heart; she felt the same courage, the same love of God and of poverty that he had; and she decided to embrace his rule in all its primitive severity, and to go out as he and his fervent disciples had done, after giving up all her earthly possessions, and beg from door to door the food that she needed. She made known her decision to Conrad, and humbly asked his consent. But the prudent director rejected the idea indignantly and reprimanded her severely, persuaded that her sex and her weakness would debar her from such a life. She besought him earnestly, and with many tears, to grant her request, and as he continued to oppose her, she left him, exclaiming, "Well, you will see; I shall do something which you cannot forbid me."

Seeing, therefore, that she could not for the time being overcome Conrad's opposition, she had recourse to other means to satisfy the burning zeal which consumed her. The regent Henry, as I remarked, whatever opinion he may have entertained regarding the habits and ideas of his sister-in-law, manifested at least outwardly towards her the respect and affection which he had promised her over the ashes of his brother, and on every occasion paid her honors which the humble Princess did her best to escape. Counting upon these good dispositions, Elizabeth, after having spent a year in his family, besought the Duke Henry to assign her a residence, where she might be left entirely to herself and her God, and where nothing could distract her from her works of devotion and charity. Henry, after consulting with his mother and brother, ceded to her, with exclusive right of possession, the city of Marburg, in Hesse, with all its dependencies and the various revenues attached thereto, as her dower. Full of grati-

tude, she thanked her brother-in-law and mother-in-law affectionately, assuring them that they were doing much more for her than she deserved, and that this was much more than sufficient for all her wants. But the Landgrave promised her, further, that he would send her five hundred marcs of silver to defray the first expenses of her establishment. Conrad does not seem to have approved of this arrangement, inasmuch as he wrote to the Pope that it was against his will the Duchess had followed him into his own country.[1] But he did not absolutely oppose her in this; and she availed herself of his approaching departure to leave Thuringia to go and establish herself near her spiritual father in that city to which her name was henceforth to give so sweet and pure a renown.

On her arrival at Marburg, after she had appointed, in accordance with Conrad's advice, the officers and magistrates who were to exercise authority in her name, the people showed themselves so eager to honor their young sovereign that her humility was grievously wounded, and she retired at once to a little village, a league distant from the city, called Wehrda, upon the charming banks of the Lahn, a river which flows by Marburg.[2] Entering that place she chose at hazard a cottage, which was abandoned and in ruins, to serve for her dwelling, in order not to be of any expense to the poor inhabitants of the village; for all her tender solicitude was already awakened in behalf of her new subjects. To secure shelter, she had to

[1] Ep. Conr. ad Pap. Nevertheless, the testimony of the four attendants declares that it was in accordance with the order of Conrad that she went to Marburg.

[2] This city still exists, and the memory of St. Elizabeth is still preserved by its Protestant inhabitants. They point out a house built upon the site of the cottage that she lived in, and which in 1834 was occupied by a peasant named Schutz, and was surrounded by a garden of roses. This village offers one of the finest points of view of the beautiful country surrounding Marburg.

squat under the stairway or chimney, and to stop up with the branches of trees, covered with leaves, the openings through which the wind and sun made their way, to her discomfort. She prepared there herself such scanty meals as she could, rendering thanks to God. This miserable habitation afforded her little protection against heat or cold. The smoke especially was very trying to her eyes. But she suffered all these mortifications joyfully, while her thoughts were with God. In the meantime she was having a little house built of wood and clay, like a poor man's cabin, at Marburg, near the convent of the Friars Minor, in order thus to show to all that it was not a rich princess who had come to establish herself in her capital, but rather a simple and patient widow who came there to serve God in all humility. As soon as this palace of Christian abjection was completed she took up her residence there with her children and her faithful attendants.

She still longed, however, for a more complete and absolute separation from the world, a closer and at the same time a more manifest union with God. As her confessor persisted in refusing her permission to embrace the Franciscan rule in its fullest extent, and to beg her bread like the religious of St. Clara, she wished at least to approach as nearly as possible that life which seemed to her the type of evangelical perfection. We have seen that even during the lifetime of her husband she had joined the Third Order of St. Francis. She resolved from that time to give to this affiliation an irrevocable and solemn character; and although up to that time this branch of the Franciscan family had not been regarded as forming a regular and, properly speaking, monastic order, she wished to make a public profession, like the cloistered religious, and to renew solemnly the vows of chastity, obedience, and absolute poverty which she had so often

made in her heart.[1] She could thus, according to the measure of her strength, adopt that total abnegation of earthly goods which during so many centuries has merited for the Seraphic Order the signal protection of God and the affectionate admiration of the Christian universe. Conrad approved of this design, after giving her to understand that her vow of poverty would not deprive her, as she wished it to do, of the free disposition of the property which came to her as her dower, or of the lands which the Duke Henry had ceded to her; but that on the contrary she herself should devote them gradually to the relief of the poor, as also to the payment of certain debts that her husband had left.

Nevertheless, in spirit she was to renounce these, as well as all other goods and all other affections of the world, even the most legitimate. To achieve this victory not only over the world, but over herself, the pious Elizabeth knew that she required something more than her own will, more than the example of her protector St. Francis, or the other holy souls who had already trod this

[1] Hélyot, *Hist. of the Religious Orders*, Vol. VII, Chap. XXXVIII, p. 390. Elizabeth was thus the first religious of the Third Order of St. Francis who made solemn vows. Moreover, this order did not assume till later a character wholly monastic, by the general adoption of the three vows and a life of seclusion. There is a diversity of opinion regarding the exact date of this transformation. The question is discussed in Hélyot, Vol. VII, Chap. XXX. But the religious of the Third Order have always taken St. Elizabeth as their special patroness, and many of their congregations have borne her name, notably in France before the Revolution, and still at the present time those who consecrate themselves to the care of the sick in Germany and Bohemia. The religious hospitallers, known in France under the name of *gray sisters*, were all of the Third Order of St. Francis (Hélyot, VII, 301). There still exists at Lyons a monastery of the daughters of St. Elizabeth, which has survived all the storms of time, and where many fervent religious are striving to lead a hidden and unknown life, of which their august patroness has given them the model.

path; she knew that before everything she would need grace from above, and she asked it of God, with more than usual fervor, during several days before taking the habit. She related to her friend Ysentrude that she besought our Lord unceasingly to grant her three gifts: first, a perfect contempt for all temporal things; then the courage to be indifferent to the injuries and calumnies of men; and finally and especially, a diminution of the excessive love which she bore her children. After having prayed for a long time with this intention, she came one day, resplendent with a joy which was not of this earth, and said to her companions: "The Lord has heard my prayer; all the riches and goods of the world, which once I loved, are but as dirt in my eyes. As for the calumnies of men, the falsehoods of the wicked, and the contempt which I inspire, they give me indeed a feeling of pride and joy. My dearly loved little children, the children of my bosom, whom I have loved so much and embraced so tenderly, yes, even these dear children are no longer any more than strangers to me, as I take God to witness. It is to Him that I give them, that I confide them; may He do with them according to His holy will in all things. I no longer love any creature or thing; I love only my Creator."

Inflamed with this heroic love, Elizabeth felt herself well disposed to make her vows and to take the habit consecrated by her glorious models, St. Francis and St. Clara. "If I could find," she said, "a poorer habit than that of Clara, I would take it, to console me for my misfortune in not being able to enter wholly into her order; but I know of none such." She chose for this ceremony the chapel which she had given to the Friars Minor, and Good Friday as the day.[1] It was the day upon which Jesus, stripped of all things for the love of us, was fastened naked to the Cross; and upon which the altars,

[1] Probably in the year 1230; according to others in 1229.

stripped and naked like Him, recall to the faithful the memory of the Supreme Sacrifice. Upon that day Elizabeth wished in like manner to strip herself of everything, and to sever the last ties which held her to the earth, that she might with greater freedom follow, in the footsteps of the Spouse of her soul, the path of poverty and charity. On that sacred day therefore, in the presence of her children and friends, and of many Franciscan religious, she came to place her saintly hands upon the bare stone of the altar, and to swear to renounce her own will, her relatives, her friends and allies, and all the pomps and joys of this world. Whilst Conrad was celebrating Mass, Brother Burckhard, Superior of the Friars Minor of the province of Hesse, who had regarded her as his daughter and spiritual friend, cut off her hair, clothed her with the gray robe, and girded her with the cord which was the distinctive mark of the Order of St. Francis. She wore this costume, going, moreover, always barefooted, until the time of her death.[1] From that day, as if to efface every mark of her past greatness, she substituted on the seal which she made use of the figure of a discalced Franciscan, in place of the armorial bearings of her family and of her husband.

Guta, her maid of honor, who had been her faithful and inseparable companion from childhood, did not wish to commence now to lead a different life from that of her dear mistress. She took the habit of the Third Order at the same time, and solemnly renewed the vow of chastity which she had made some years before, during the lifetime of the Duke Louis. This sweet community of life

[1] Cod. Heidelb., p. 23. This contemporary writer adds that the King of Hungary, Stephen, nephew of St. Elizabeth, visiting a convent at Strigonia, and seeing a picture in the church, in which the Saint was represented without any cord about her waist, and with shoes on her feet, immediately ordered it repainted with cord and without shoes.

and of intention offered at least to Elizabeth a consolation which she would perhaps have denied herself, had she been conscious of it, and which was but too soon to be taken from her. But from that time she had to be separated from her children, whom she reproached herself for loving so passionately. Her eldest son, Hermann, the heir of his father's estates, then six or seven years of age, was taken to the castle of Creuzburg, to remain there under good and safe care, until he should be able to assume the reins of government, which his uncle held in the meantime. It is probable that the same place was made the residence of her eldest daughter Sophia, who was already betrothed to the young Duke of Brabant. Her second daughter Sophia returned to the abbey of Kitzingen, where she was to take the veil, and where she spent the remainder of her life. The youngest child, Gertrude, scarcely two years old, born since the death of her father, was sent to the convent of the Premonstrants of Aldenberg, near Wetzlar. Every one was surprised that this young princess was placed in so poor a house, and one which had but just been founded, and Elizabeth was severely criticised for it; but she replied that that had been agreed upon between her husband and herself, at the time of their parting, and even before the birth of the child. "It was heaven," she said, "that inspired us to choose that monastery, for God wishes that my daughter should contribute to the spiritual and temporal advancement of that house."[1]

Her sacrifice now is accomplished, her separation from the world is made complete, by one of those efforts which go even beyond the precepts of Christian duty. There remains no longer anything for her to give up; all is dead to her in the world, and at the age of twenty-two she may

[1] Manuscript Chronicle of Aldenberg, in the possession of the Prince of Solms, at Braunfels, quoted by Justi, *Vorzeit*, 1823, p. 271. The Saint's prophecy was verified, as we shall see later on.

say with the apostle: *I live, but it is no longer I who live: it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.*[1]

And yet even then, the world and the prince of this world, who had always pursued her with their hatred, stood ready to renew with increased malice their attacks and outrages upon her. The great and the wise ones of that time could only offer insults to this spouse of Christ, and they loudly proclaimed her folly. Nor were they mistaken, for she had understood and embraced in its fullest extent the folly of the Cross.

What was said then at the Thuringian court will undoubtedly be often repeated by many who have known her history, and who whilst relishing some of the fresh and poetic details of her earlier years, will be repelled by this decisive step in her life. What! they will say, still so young, with so many duties to perform, so much legitimate happiness to enjoy, she must needs choose so extraordinary an existence! impose upon herself such unnecessary suffering! give up the care of her children, and all the obligations of life and much more of the frivolous reasoning which characterizes that wordly wisdom which seeks to calumniate whatever is above its own egoism and weakness.

Christians! such shall not be our thoughts at beholding the triumph of our Christian heroine. Because we are too weak to imitate and follow her, we will not be so blind as not to admire her. We will bow with tender respect before those secrets of divine love, before that absolute obedience to the solemn words of our Saviour: *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*[2]

Let the world insult and despise her; we need not be

[1] Vivo autem, jam non ego: vivit vero in me Christus. — Gal. ii, 20.

[2] St. Luke xiv, 26.

astonished, for, like Christ, she conquered the world. In that war which it wages against the soul redeemed by the blood of a God from the very hour of its birth, she fought nobly. With her young hand she fearlessly picked up the gauntlet which it had thrown down. She fought the good fight, not at a distance and shielded from its blows, but moving resolutely in the midst of its attacks and its innumerable snares. At an age when the dim vision of the eyes of the soul renders so many faults excusable, she had already overcome all the false shame, all the prejudices, all the deceits of the world. She denied its rights over her, disobeyed its laws, braved its calumnies, scorned its scorn. She conquered it everywhere and always, — in the splendor of riches and the pomp of courts, as in the bitterness of hunger and poverty; in the sweetest and most legitimate affections of the heart, as in the severest trials; in desertion, solitude, and death. She sacrificed all, — the sacred ties of married life, maternal affection, and finally her very character. And if now she withdraws from her enemy, it is simply that she has won the victory and finished the fight. Coming upon the battlefield as a mere child, she leaves it only after having overcome and immolated her rival. Now that she has trampled the vanquished serpent under her feet, shall she not be permitted to lay down her arms, and to await amid the mysterious joys of poverty and obedience the day of eternal triumph?

CHAPTER XXIV

Dear St. Elizabeth's Life of Extreme Poverty; her Increased Humility and Charity towards all Men

Manum suam misit ad fortia et digiti ejus apprehenderunt fusum. Manum suam aperuit inopi et palmas suas extendit ad pauperem.
Prov. XXXI, 19, 20.

Amen dico vobis, quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis. St. Matt. XXV, 40.

Elegi abjectus esse.
Ps. LXXXIII, 11.

Elizabeth, left alone with her God, wished the voluntary poverty which she had imposed upon herself to be as real and complete as possible. She wished her whole life to correspond with the log and clay hut which she had chosen as her dwelling. She therefore devoted all the revenues, without exception, which Conrad had obliged her to keep nominally in her possession to the relief of the poor, and to charitable institutions. Having been unable to obtain the permission of her confessor to beg her bread, she resolved to gain her living by the work of her hands. Her only means of accomplishing this was to spin. Moreover, she did not know how to spin flax, but wool only. She had wool sent to her from the monastery of Aldenburg which she worked up and returned all spun to the religious. The latter paid her for her work in money, and oftentimes less than it was really worth. She, however, was scrupulously careful in the performance

of her work. One day when she had received payment in advance for a certain quantity of wool that she was to spin, Conrad sent word to her to come with him from Marburg to Eisenach. Seeing that she could not wholly complete her task, she sent back to the convent the little wool that then remained for her to spin, with a Cologne denier, for fear she might be accused of taking more than she had earned. She worked, moreover, with so much earnestness, that even when her extreme weakness and her frequent illness obliged her to remain in bed, she still continued her spinning. Her companions would take the distaff from her hands, that she might spare herself; but then, in order not to remain idle, she would pick over and prepare the wool for the next time. From the small proceeds of her labor she deducted enough to make some humble offering to the Church; and with the remainder she procured her scanty nourishment. Her food was of the coarsest and most insipid kind. If any one presented her with some palatable or delicate dish, she hastened to carry it to the poor of her hospital without ever tasting it herself. She did not, however, disregard the counsels of Christian prudence on this subject. She asked her physician to let her know the exact limit to which she might carry her abstinence, lest in going beyond it she might bring upon herself unnecessary infirmities, which would render her incapable of serving God well, and for which He would require a strict account from her. She was, moreover, very frequently ill. She generally eat nothing but the commonest kind of vegetables, cooked in pure water, without any salt. She prepared them herself, however they were done. Whilst she was thus engaged in the cares of her modest housekeeping, she kept her soul, as well as her eyes, raised constantly towards God in prayer or meditation; and it frequently happened that whilst she was standing alone near the fire, over which

her simple dishes were cooking, or when she drew near to warm herself, she became so absorbed in contemplation that sparks or coals would fall upon her poor garments and burn them, without her being aware of it, although her companions, when they came in, would be suffocated by the odor of burning clothing.

Her garments corresponded with her food. She wore a dress of coarse, undyed cloth, such as peasants and poor people only made use of. This dress, all torn, especially in the sleeves, was patched with pieces of different colored cloth, and fastened close about her person by a large cord. Her cloak, of the same material as her dress, having become too short, she lengthened it with a piece of a different color. She picked up pieces of cloth of all sorts of colors, wherever she found them, with which she repaired, with her own hands, the torn and burnt places in her clothes, doing the work as well as she could; but she could not sew nicely. She was not afraid to go out in this costume; a fact which only confirmed the opinion that worldly men had formed of her folly, but which caused her to be regarded by some pious souls as a second St. Clara. She stripped herself constantly even of these coarse garments to give them to the poor, and went herself with scarce any clothing, which compelled her in the very cold weather of winter to remain near her little fireside; or she would conceal herself in bed between two mattresses, without really being covered by them, and would say, "Here I am, stretched as though I were in my coffin." And this added discomfort was for her a source of increased satisfaction.

In the midst of all these privations, she lost none of her amenity of character, or affability, or extreme and universal kindness, which had always distinguished her. From her earliest childhood she had always preferred the society of the poor and humble to any other; and now, having retired to her pious solitude, she manifested, not only

towards her maids of honor who had wished to remain associated with her, but also towards the servants whom Conrad had assigned her, a tender and sweet cordiality. She never wished any of them, however mean their extraction, to give her any title of honor, or to call her by any other name than that of her baptism — simply Elizabeth — addressing her familiarly, as though she were their equal or inferior. She sought to serve rather than to be served by them. This daughter of a king preferred to wash and wipe the dishes and utensils of the household rather than have them do it. In order to be able to attend freely to this work, so servile in the eyes of men, but ennobled in the eyes of God by a sublime humility, she found means of sending her servants away, charging them with some errand outside. When they returned, they found that their mistress had done all their work. After having prepared her meal with them, as we have seen, she made them sit at the table by her side, and frequently in her own place. One of them, named Irmengard, who related all these details to the eclesiastical judges, abashed by so much humility on the part of a princess lately so powerful, said to her one day, "It is true, madam, that you are acquiring great merit for yourself by your conduct towards us; but do not forget the danger that you are causing us to run, that of being filled with pride, when you make us eat with you and sit by your side." To which the Duchess replied, "Ah! since that is the case, you must come and sit on my knees"; and she immediately took her in her arms and made her sit down in her lap.

Her patience and charity were proof against any temptation; nothing could irritate her, or draw from her any sign of discontent. She held frequent and long conversations with her companions; and the celestial sweetness and gayety of her heart overflowed in these familiar interviews, which were none the less profitable for that reason

to the salvation of those who listened to her. But she would not permit any one to make use in her presence of vain and light words, or such as indicated anger or impatience. She always interrupted them. "Well!" she would say, "and where is our Lord now?" And she rebuked the guilty ones with an authority full of grace and sweetness.[1]

In the midst of this life, apparently so hard and so humiliating, but so glorious before God, and so full of ineffable joy for her who had given herself wholly to Him, Elizabeth could not forget that which was in her eyes, after the care of her soul's salvation, the first and only interest of her earthly life, — the relief of her afflicted and poor brethren. Having given up everything, having sacrificed all, that she might the more surely find Jesus in heaven, she could not neglect His suffering and scattered members here on earth. Not content with having relinquished to the poor the exclusive enjoyment of her patrimony, to the extent of not reserving enough to provide for the first necessities of her own life — which obliged her director to put a check upon her prodigality — she felt herself impelled, as in her early years, to participate in all the misfortunes of the afflicted, and to dress herself the wounds of their bodies as well as those of their souls. As soon as she arrived at Marburg, her first care was to build a hospital there; she consecrated it to the memory of St. Francis of Assisi, according to the direction of Pope Gregory IX. This Pontiff, who had just canonized the angelic man, felt that, on the occasion of the translation of his body, he ought to send to his royal and intrepid imitatress a present more precious still than the poor cloak which she had recently received with so much gratitude. This was some drops of the blood which had

[1] *Ubi nunc Dominus?* According to St. Bonaventure, *Ubi non est Dominus?*

escaped from his side when he received from heaven the impression of the divine stigmata. Elizabeth received this sacred gift in the same spirit that had inspired the Pope to send it to her, as another pledge of her union with and affection for him who of all men thus far had been able to follow most closely the footsteps of the Saviour of the world. She believed that she could not more fittingly honor this holy relic than by depositing it in the asylum of human miseries to which she was going to consecrate the remainder of her days. As soon as this hospital was completed, she placed there as many poor sick persons as she possibly could. Then, every day, accompanied by her two faithful friends and sisters in religion, Guta and Ysentrude, she went there to spend long hours in dressing their wounds, in caring for them, administering to them the remedies prescribed, and especially in consoling them by the most affectionate exhortations, adapted to the kind of suffering and to the spiritual condition of each sick person. It was not merely the charitable instinct of her soul, or the imperative need of relieving the misfortunes of her fellow beings, that she seemed to obey; but as if she would find in these works of mercy a last means of immolating that flesh which she had already so often overcome, she transformed them into mortifications and austerities of a new and formidable kind, and it would be difficult to say which was stronger in her heart, the love of her neighbor, or the hatred of that sinful body which alone still separated her from her Divine Saviour. She was not only the consoler of the poor, she became also their servant, and no service seemed to her too repulsive, too hard, or too menial; for each one of them was for her the living image of the celestial Spouse of her soul. Those of the sick who were most likely to inspire disgust, who repelled and shocked every one, became at once the object of her solicitude and ten-

derness, and received from her royal hands care of the most repulsive kind. She caressed them with sweet familiarity; she kissed their ulcers and their horrible wounds. Within the memory of man, none had ever witnessed so wonderful a victory achieved over all the repugnances of the senses, or so great earnestness and perseverance united in the practice of the most humble self-devotion. Every one was astonished at the spectacle of such a life, chosen of her own free will by the daughter of a king, scarce twenty-two years of age; a parallel of which was not to be found even in the lives of the Saints up to that time. But the spirit of God had inspired her with that holy violence, in its full extent, to which heaven has been promised.

Such practices were far from meeting with general sympathy or approbation, and there were pious persons even who thought that she went too far; but she knew too well how to conquer herself to give way to the opinion of men. One day, as she was going to church, she met a poor beggar whom she brought home with her, and whose hands and feet she undertook first thing to wash. This time, however, this occupation inspired her with such disgust that she shuddered at it. But instantly, to subdue this feeling, she said to herself: "Aha! wretched stomach, that disgusts you, does it? Know, then, that this is a most holy beverage." And saying this, she drank the water which she had just used. Then she said: "O my Lord! when Thou wast upon Thy holy Cross, Thou didst drink vinegar and gall; I am not worthy of such a beverage; help me to become better."

Lepers, who were especially an object of horror to most men, because of the easy contagion of their terrible disease, were for that very reason those whom she nursed and cared for the most. She washed and bathed them herself, cut up curtains and other valuable materials, to

have something with which to wipe them and to wrap them in when they came out from the bath; she made their beds for them herself, put them to bed, and covered them as well as she could. "O how blessed we are," she said one day to her attendants, "in being able to wash and to clothe our Lord!" To which one of them replied: "It may be, madam, that you like to be with these people; but I doubt very much whether others like it as well as you do." Master Conrad, however, felt that her charity was leading her beyond the bounds of Christian prudence, and he forbade her to touch or to kiss the ulcers of lepers and other sick persons, for fear that she might herself contract their disease. But this precaution failed to accomplish its purpose, for the grief which she experienced in consequence of this prohibition, and the restraint put upon the impetuous compassion of her heart, was so violent that she became seriously ill from it.

This zealous disciple of Christ did not, however, confine her compassion or her deeds of mercy to the physical ills of her fellow creatures; she never lost sight of the health of their souls, and the spiritual remedies suitable thereto. With the tender care she gave them, she frequently mingled pious exhortations; she watched scrupulously to see that the poor had their children baptized as early as possible; that all the sick should ask for, and receive the sacraments, not only at the moment of their death, but upon their entrance into the hospital. Although her own example added so much force to her words, she often met with resistance on the part of souls imbittered by misfortune, or rendered lukewarm by their long neglect of the assistance offered by the Church. At such times she knew how to unite the energy of Christian zeal with her habitual sweetness. One day, among others, a blind invalid presented himself at the hospital and asked to be admitted. Elizabeth happened to meet Master Conrad

just then at the door. She gladly consented to the applicant's admission, on condition that he should begin by curing his interior sickness by approaching the tribunal of penance. But the blind man, rendered impatient by his ill health and by this exhortation, began to swear and blaspheme, treating these practices as superstitious. Elizabeth was indignant, and replied with so much vehemence that he was suddenly touched with contrition, and kneeling down he made his confession on the spot to Master Conrad.

Nor did she, by any means, limit her charity to the precincts of this hospital, which was her favorite resort; she went with her attendants to visit the huts of all the poor of Marburg and the surrounding country, and at the same time had meat, bread, flour, and other articles brought, which she herself distributed among the needy. She investigated with kindly interest the exact condition of their cheerless habitations, and carefully examined their clothes and their beds, in order to be able to supply them with whatever relief they needed. She distributed among them the proceeds of all her jewels, her rings, her silk veils, and such worldly ornaments as she had left, which she secretly sold. In this also she showed herself eager to render them the most devoted service, and to provide for their least desires. One winter's day, during severe cold weather, a poor sick man fancied that he would like some fish. She immediately ran to a fountain nearby, and invoking the aid of her Divine Helper, she said: "Lord Jesus Christ, if it be according to Thy will, give me some fish for Thy poor sick one." Then having drawn up some water, she found a large fish in it, which she hastened to bring to her patient.

When, in going about on her errands of charity, she met any poor persons whose destitute condition or sufferings seemed especially deserving of compassion, or whose

devotion rendered them the more sacred in her eyes, she made them come not only to her hospital, but to her own wretched little dwelling, devoted herself wholly to their service, and made them eat at her table. Conrad remonstrated with her against this custom, but she replied to him: "Oh no, my master, leave them to me! Think of my former life, passed in the vanities of the world. A wrong must be righted by its contrary; I must live now with the humble. This society procures me many graces. Let me therefore enjoy it."

Among others she took a little orphan boy, a paralytic from his birth, blind, and afflicted, moreover, with a constant bloody flux. This poor creature, abandoned and suffering from so many afflictions, found in her more than a mother. She spent entire nights watching by his side, rendering him services of the most repulsive nature, covering him with caresses, and consoling him with the most loving words. He died, and she filled his place at once with a young girl who had been attacked with leprosy, and disfigured in the most horrible manner, to such an extent that in the hospital no one dared to approach her, or even to look at her from a distance. Elizabeth, on the contrary, as soon as she saw her, went up to her with a sort of pious veneration, as though it were our Lord Himself who appeared to her under this veil of sorrows; and the Princess was seen to kneel down before the leper, untie her shoes, and remove them and her stockings, in spite of the child's resistance. Then she washed and dressed her sores, gave her all the medicines prescribed, cut her finger and toe nails, and bestowed upon her such affectionate and beneficent care that the condition of this unfortunate person was soon improved. Elizabeth had her brought to her own home, made her bed herself, and spent long hours by her side, during which she sought to distract her by playing with her, and to console her by

words full of sweetness and tenderness. Master Conrad, however, having heard of this conduct of his penitent, had the young leper moved away from her, for fear that she herself might be attacked by the contagion, and even imposed upon her for this excess of zeal, a penance so severe that he felt himself called upon to testify his repentance to the Pope.

But Elizabeth, whose indefatigable zeal nothing could discourage, received at once into her house a young child afflicted with a disease almost as revolting as leprosy, and cared for and treated him with a practical knowledge and skill which charity alone, that supreme science, could have taught her. She kept him there until his death.

Nevertheless, lepers continued to be the object of her predilection, and in a certain sense of her envy, since of all human afflictions this was the one that could best detach its victims from the illusions of this life. Brother Gérard, Provincial of the Franciscans in Germany, who was, after Master Conrad, the most intimate confidant of her pious thoughts, having come one day to visit her, she talked a long time with him concerning holy poverty, and towards the close of their conversation she exclaimed: "Ah! father, what I would like above all things, and could wish with all my heart, would be to be treated in all respects like an ordinary leper. I would like to have a little hut of straw and hay built for me, such as they build for these poor people, with a sign hung before the door to warn the passers-by, and a charity box to receive their alms."[1] At these words she lost consciousness and fell into a sort of ecstasy, during which the Father Provincial, who had lifted her in his arms, heard her singing

[1] Cod. Heidelb., p. 31. It was in huts of this kind, as we shall see later on, that lepers, whose cure was considered impossible, were shut up with a certain religious ceremony.

sacred hymns, at the conclusion of which she regained her consciousness.

In order to explain these remarkable words of our Saint, I shall venture to present here some account of the manner in which leprosy, and the unfortunate beings who were attacked by it, were regarded during Catholic ages.[1] In those times of universal faith, religion could struggle face to face against the evils of society, whose absolute sovereign she was; and she confronted this supreme calamity with all the alleviations which faith and piety could prompt in Christian souls. Unable to overcome the deplorable material results of this malady, she could at least prevent the moral reprobation which might attach to its unfortunate victims. She had clothed them with a sort of pious consecration, and had constituted them as the representatives and pontiffs of that burden of sorrows which Jesus Christ had come to take upon Himself, and which all the children of the Church regard it as their first duty to alleviate among their fellow beings. Leprosy, therefore, at that period, possessed something that was sacred in the eyes of the Church and of the faithful; it was a gift of God,[2] a special distinction, a mark, so to speak, of divine consideration. The annals of Normandy relate that a cavalier of most illustrious birth, one of the brave knights of the time of William the Conqueror, having become a monk, humbly asked of God, as a special grace, that he might be stricken with an incurable leprosy, in order thus to redeem his sins, and that his prayer was heard. The hand of God, the God of infinite justice and mercy, had touched a Christian, had stricken him in

[1] I owe these particulars principally to the excellent work of M. Clément Brentano, on the *Sisters of Charity*, in which is to be found much valuable information regarding Catholic charity at all periods.

[2] This is the expression which is made use of in the public acts relating to lepers, down to the middle of the sixteenth century.

a manner mysterious and incomprehensible to human science, and from that moment there was something venerable in his affliction. Solitude, reflection, and recourse to God alone, became a necessity for the leper; but the love and the prayers of his brethren followed him in his isolation. The Church had been able to reconcile the most tender solicitude for these unfortunate members of her fold[1] with the measures which were exacted by the safety of all, to prevent the contagion from spreading. There is perhaps nothing more touching and at the same time more solemn in her liturgy than the ceremony called *separatio leprosorum*, which was observed in the sequestration of him whom God had stricken, in those places where there was no hospital especially set apart for the use of lepers. Mass for the dead was celebrated in his presence; then, after having blessed all the utensils which were to be used by him in his solitude, and after each of the assistants had offered him an alms, the clergy, preceded by the cross and accompanied by all the faithful, conducted him to an isolated hut, which was assigned to him as a place of abode. On the roof of this hut the priest placed some earth from the cemetery, saying, *Sis mortuus mundo, vivens iterum Deo* ("Be thou dead to the world, and born anew to God")! The priest then addressed to him words of consolation, in which he pictured to him the joys of paradise, and reminded him of his spiritual communion with the Church, whose prayers would avail him more even in his solitude than before. Then he planted a wooden cross before the door of the hut, and hung thereon

[1] In the cartulary of the abbey of Contura, at Le Mans, there appears a bull addressed directly by Pope Clement III, in 1189, to his dear children the lepers of Sabolio, *dilectis filiis leprosis de Sabolio*, in which he grants them a cemetery at Solesmes, despite the opposition of the Abbot of Contura, of which the priory of Solesmes was a dependency.

a charity-box, to receive the alms of the passers-by; and all left him. At Easter only, lepers were allowed to come out of their tombs, as Christ Himself had done, and to enter the cities and villages, during a certain number of days, to participate in the universal joy of Christendom. When they died thus isolated, their funeral was performed with the office of *Confessors not Pontiffs.*

The thought of the Church had been understood by all her children. Lepers had received the sweetest and most consoling names from the people. They were called *God's invalids, God's dear poor, the good people.* They loved to recall that Jesus Himself had been designated by the Holy Ghost as a leper, *Et nos putavimus eum quasi leprosum;*[1] that He had had a leper as His host when St. Mary Magdalene came to anoint His feet; that He had chosen the leper Lazarus as the symbol of the elect soul; that He had often taken this form Himself in appearing to His saints on earth.[2] Moreover, it was chiefly in consequence of pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and the Crusades, that leprosy had spread in Europe; and this origin added to its sacred character. An order of chivalry, that of St. Lazarus, had been founded at Jerusalem, devoted exclusively to the care of lepers, and had a leper as grand master;[3] and an order of women had consecrated themselves to the same work in the same city, at the hospital of St. John the Almoner. Bishop Hugh of Lincoln, a native of Franche-Comté, and of the order of Chartreux, admitted lepers to the kiss of peace; and when his chancellor reminded him that St. Martin healed lepers by

[1] Is. liii, 4.

[2] See the beautiful legends of St. Julian, of St. Leo IX, Pope, and especially of Martyrius, related by St. Gregory the Great in his Homilies.

[3] This order was transferred to France by St. Louis, and afterwards united with that of Mount Carmel, as in Savoy it was with that of St. Mauritius.

embracing them, the bishop replied: "Yes, the kiss of Martin healed the physical malady of the lepers; in my case the kiss of the lepers heals my soul."

Among the kings and the great ones of the earth, Elizabeth was not alone in honoring Christ in the successors of Lazarus; illustrious and powerful princes considered this duty as one of the prerogatives of their crowns. Robert, King of France, visited their hospital constantly, St. Louis treated them with a most brotherly affection, visited them on Ember Days, and kissed their wounds.[1] Henry III, King of England, did the same. The Countess Sybilla of Flanders, having accompanied her husband Theodoric to Jerusalem, in 1156, went to the hospital of St. John the Almoner, to devote herself to the care of the lepers there, whilst the Count was engaged in fighting against the infidels. One day, as she was washing the sores of these unfortunate creatures, she felt her heart revolt, as did Elizabeth's, against so disgusting an occupation; but immediately, to punish herself, she took into her mouth some of the water that she had been using, and swallowed it down, saying to her heart, "You must learn to serve God in the persons of these poor people; that is your present vocation, even though you burst in accomplishing it." When her husband left Palestine, she asked permission from him to remain there, to consecrate the rest of her life to

[1] His conversation with Joinville will be remembered in which he asked the latter which he would prefer, to be a leper or to have committed a mortal sin. Joinville replied that he would rather have committed thirty of them than to be a leper. When they were all alone, the saintly king reproached his friend for his reply in these terms: "You speak thoughtlessly. No leprosy is so hateful as mortal sin, for the soul that is in that state is like to the devil. I beseech you, therefore, most earnestly, for the love of God and of me, that you teach your heart to feel that you would rather any harm befall your body, leprosy or any other malady, than that mortal sin should enter your soul." Joinville, ed. 1761, p. 6.

the service of the lepers. Her brother, Baudouin III, King of Jerusalem, joined his prayers to those of this heroine of charity. The Count resisted a long time, and consented to this separation from Sybilla only after he had received from the king his brother-in-law, to reward him for his sacrifice, an invaluable relic, a drop of the Blood of Our Saviour, obtained by Joseph of Arimathea, when our Lord was taken down from the Cross. He returned, therefore, alone to his native country, bearing with him this sacred treasure, which he deposited in the city of Bruges; and the pious people of Flanders learned with great veneration how their Count had sold his wife to Christ and to the poor, and how he had brought back, as the price of this surrender, the Blood of their God.[1]

The saints of the Middle Ages manifested a sublime devotion in behalf of lepers. St. Catharine of Sienna's hands were attacked by leprosy whilst she was caring for an old woman afflicted with the malady, whom she wished to lay out and to bury herself; but after having persevered thus to the end in her sacrifice, she saw her hands become white and pure as those of a newly born infant, and a soft light shining forth from the places which had been affected the most. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clara, his noble companion, St. Odila of Alsace, St. Judith of Poland, St. Edmund of Canterbury, and later St. Francis Xavier and St. Jane Francis de Chantal, were glad to render the most humble services to lepers. Oftentimes their prayers obtained an instantaneous cure.[2]

[1] The beautiful chapel, known as that of the *Holy Blood*, built to serve as a sanctuary for this relic, is still seen at Bruges near the *hotel de ville*.

[2] A very ancient tradition, profoundly symbolical, and founded, moreover, on the Holy Scriptures, regarded leprosy as the most perfect symbol of sin, and as something consequently which could be cured only by innocent blood, just as the original sin of man could be redeemed only by the innocent blood of the Man God. This tradition

It was in the midst of this glorious company that Elizabeth had already taken her place, by the invincible longings of her heart to be united with the God whom she always saw in the person of the poor. But whilst waiting for that time when she might taste with them the eternal joys of heaven, nothing on earth could calm the ardor of that compassion which consumed her heart, nor relieve the languor of a soul sick and distracted by the sufferings of her fellow beings.

appears in numerous legends and poems of the Middle Ages. One of the most celebrated poems of the time of St. Elizabeth, *Poor Henry*, by Hartmann von der Aue, was founded upon it.

CHAPTER XXV

Dear St. Elizabeth refuses to return to the Kingdom of her Father, that she may be more Sure of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven

Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum saeculi contempsi propter amorem Domini mei Jesu Christi quem vidi, quem amavi, in quem credidi, quem dilexi. — Roman Breviary. Common of holy women.

In nidulo meo moriar.

Job XXIX, 18.

In the meantime the King of Hungary, the rich and powerful father of this poor infirmarian, had received, through the Hungarian pilgrims who visited Aix-la-Chapelle and other sanctuaries of the Rhine, news of the state of poverty and destitution to which his daughter had been reduced. They related to him how shocked they had been at learning that their Princess was living without honors, without a court, and in a condition of absolute beggary. The King was amazed and moved to tears by their story; he complained to his council of the injury that had been done his daughter, and resolved to send an ambassador to bring her back to him. He intrusted this mission to Count Banfi.[1] This nobleman went to Thuringia, with a numerous suite, and first visited Wartburg. There he found the Landgrave Henry, from whom he demanded an explanation of the extraordinary position of the Duchess.

[1] Contemporary authors call this count Pamias or Panias, but I have thought best to adopt the correction proposed by Count Mailath, an Hungarian scholar of our own time.

The young Prince replied to him, "My sister has become a perfect fool, as every one knows; you will see it yourself." Then he related how she had retired to Marburg, and all the extravagances which she had committed there, living only in the society of beggars and lepers, and other details of this sort. He assured the ambassador that Elizabeth's poverty was wholly voluntary, and that he on his part had guaranteed her the possession of all that she could desire. The Count, greatly astonished, set out for Marburg. On his arrival there, he inquired of the landlord at whose house he stopped, what he thought of the lady called Elizabeth, who had come to this country from Hungary; why she lived in poverty; why she had left the princes of her husband's family; whether there were any reason for her doing so that was not to her honor. "She is a very pious lady," replied the host, "and most virtuous. She is as rich as one could wish to be, for this city with the entire canton, which is not small, belongs to her in her own right, and if she had wished it, she could easily enough have found princes to marry her. But because of her great humility she wishes to live in this state of poverty. She does not wish to reside in any of the city houses, preferring to live near the hospital which she built, for she despises all earthly riches. God has bestowed upon us a great blessing in sending us so pious a lady; all who have any business with her derive profit therefrom to their salvation. She gives herself no rest in her works of charity; she is most chaste, most gentle, most merciful; but above all things she is the most humble of creatures." The Count asked the landlord to conduct him at once to where she lived. The latter went in first and said to her, "Madam, some friends of yours are here, who have come, I believe, to see you; they wish to speak with you." The ambassador having entered the hut, and seeing the daughter of his king engaged in

spinning, and holding the distaff in her hand, was so impressed by the sight that he made the sign of the cross, and burst into tears. Then he exclaimed, "Did any one ever see the daughter of a king spinning wool!" Then seating himself by her side, he told her that the King her father had sent him to find her and to bring her back to the land of her birth. He promised her that she should then be treated with all the honor due to her state, and that the King regarded her still as his dearest daughter. But she resisted all his entreaties. "Whom do you take me for?" she said to him. "I am but a poor sinner, who never obeyed the law of my God as I ought to have done." "Who reduced you to this state of poverty?" asked the Count. "No one," she replied, "unless it be the infinitely rich Son of my Heavenly Father, Who has taught me by His example to despise riches and to love poverty above all the kingdoms of this world." Then she gave him an account of her whole life since she had become a widow, and told him of her intentions for the rest of her life, and assured him that she had no fault to find with any one, that she needed nothing and was perfectly happy. The Count, however, persisted in his entreaties. "Come, noble queen," he said to her, "come back with me to your dear father, come and take possession of his kingdom and your inheritance." "I hope indeed," she said, "that I already possess the inheritance of my Father, that is to say, the eternal mercy of our dear Lord Jesus Christ." Finally the ambassador besought her not to do her father the injustice of leading so despicable a life, not to afflict him by conduct so unworthy of her birth. "Say to my noble father," replied Elizabeth, "that I am happier in this despicable life than he can be in his royal magnificence, and that far from grieving on my account, he ought rather to rejoice that he has a child in the service of the great King of heaven and earth. I ask him but for one thing in this

world; that is to pray for me and to have others pray for me, and on my part, I will pray for him as long as I live."

The Count seeing that all his efforts were useless, left her with profound sorrow. But she resumed her distaff, happy in being able to realize in advance the sublime word which the Church makes use of in commemorating those who, like her, have renounced all for Jesus; *I have depised the kingdom of the world, and all earthly glory, for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ, Whom I have seen, Whom I have loved, in Whom I have believed, and Whom I have preferred.*[1]

[1] Roman Breviary. Response in the office of holy women.

CHAPTER XXVI

Dear St. Elizabeth distributes all her Possessions among the Poor

Si dederit homo omnem substantiam domus suae pro dilectione, quasi nihil despiciet eam. — Cant. VIII, 7.

Calore charitatis
Calefacti pauperes
Juxta prunas nuditatis
Laetantur immemores.
Anthem of St. Elizabeth in the Old Breviary of the Dominicans.

However convinced the Landgrave Henry may have been of the folly of his sister-in-law, he nevertheless felt himself bound to redeem the promise which he had voluntarily made to her. Fear of the Pope, who had become Elizabeth's protector, and the influence of Conrad of Marburg, which was as great over him as it had been over his brother Louis, were probably incentives to this fidelity. He therefore sent her five hundred marcs of silver which he had promised at the time of her departure from Wartburg, to defray the expenses of her establishment in her new residence. This increase of riches seemed to the charitable Princess only a favorable opportunity of realizing a project which she had long cherished, that of relieving herself wholly of the care of all the goods which she had still retained possession of, by depriving herself at once of the enjoyment of them. She disposed of all the property which her brother-in-law had been obliged to restore to her at the time of the return of the knights of the Crusade, which realized the then very considerable

sum of two thousand marcs. She determined, says one of her pious historians, that her riches should be put to good use at once, remembering the brevity of human life, and believing that in this way they would the more surely assist her in reaching the life which is eternal. She caused even the jewels and ornaments which she still retained, of those which her parents had sent with her from Hungary, to be sold, such as vases of gold and silver, cloth embroidered in gold, and various articles ornamented with jewels of great value. The money derived from this sale, as well as from that of her domains, was all of it distributed by her among the poor, at different times, but with a prodigality which brought upon her the reproaches of many who had no need of her assistance. She was treated with disdain, as a prodigal, as a spendthrift, and still more as a fool; but she was not in the least disturbed by this sort of talk. She felt that the sacrifice of her perishable riches was an insignificant price to pay for the eternal salvation of her soul. When she received the five hundred marcs that the Duke Henry sent her, she resolved to distribute them at once, all on the same day, among the poor. That the field of her charity might be commensurate with the generous sum which she was thus about to dispose of, she caused public notice to be given in all places within twenty-five leagues of Marburg that all the poor should assemble, upon a certain day, on a plain near Wehrda, the village in which she herself had spent the first days of her voluntary poverty.

On the appointed day several thousand needy applicants appeared, among whom were the blind, the cripple, the infirm and the poor of both sexes, besides a large crowd of people anxious to witness so extraordinary a spectacle. To preserve order amidst this multitude, as well as to ensure justice in the distribution of relief among the needy, so often impatient and disorderly, the Duchess had

stationed a sufficient force of officers and strong servants with orders to see that each one kept his place, lest some might find means, to the prejudice of their companions, of securing twice over the alms intended for each poor person. She directed that any one violating this rule should have his hair cut off at once. A young girl named Hildegundes, distinguished for the extreme beauty of her hair, having been seized as she was leaving the place which had been first assigned her to go to the relief of a sick sister, her beautiful hair, which she wore flowing over her shoulders, according to the custom of the young women of Marburg, was cut off. Seeing herself thus treated, the young women began to weep and lament, loudly protesting her innocence. She was brought before the Duchess, who, after congratulating her upon the fact that the loss of her hair would prevent her from taking part thereafter in the dances and profane festivities, asked her, with that inspiration which seems a gift of holy souls, whether she had ever conceived the idea of leading a better life. "I should have consecrated myself long ago to my Lord," replied Hildegundes, "and should have taken the religious habit, but that it would have cost me too much to sacrifice the beauty of my hair." Elizabeth, filled with joy at these words, exclaimed, "Then indeed I am happier to know that your hair has been cut than I would be if my son had been elected Emperor of the Romans." She afterwards took this young girl into her own household, and the latter, heeding the warning that had come to her on that day, consecrated herself to the service of God and His poor in the hospital of the Duchess.

In the meantime the distribution of alms, as announced, proceeded with perfect order through the assistance of reliable and faithful persons to whom Elizabeth had assigned this duty. She herself presided over the work, passing from rank to rank, wearing a linen cloth about her

waist, as Jesus Christ had served His disciples. She went about through the vast throng of people radiant and rejoicing over the happiness which she was giving, her face serene and tranquil, her heart filled with joy, and her lips uttering words of kindness and affection, and addressed especially to those poor strangers whom she saw for the first time; mingling a sweet gayety with her compassion and a celestial simplicity with her boundless generosity, finding that at each step she was giving fresh consolation to some new misery. This royal daughter at length found herself in the midst of the only court that could afford her pleasure; truly a queen that day by her mercy, she was there, surrounded by her army of poor, like a sovereign on her throne, and despite the wretched costume which she wore, to the dazzled eyes of those whose suffering she was relieving, she appeared resplendent as the sun and clad in garments as white as the snow. The five hundred marcs being all disposed of, as the night came on and the moon rose beautifully, those who were well enough started to return to their several homes; but many who were feeble or ill could not at once set out on their return journey, and prepared themselves to spend the night in different nooks and corners of the hospital and neighboring buildings. Elizabeth noticed them as she entered, and always swayed by her inexhaustible compassion, she said immediately to those with her, "Ah! see the infirm have remained; give them something more." Thereupon she caused six deniers of Cologne to be given to each one of them, and would not permit the little children who were among them to receive any less than the others. Then she had a bountiful supply of bread brought and distributed among them. Finally she said, "I want these poor people to have a perfect feast; let fires be made for them." According to her orders large fires were lit wherever they were lying, and their feet were washed and perfumed.

The poor people, seeing themselves so well treated, gave loud expression to their joy and began to sing. The sound of their voices, singing, reached the ears of Elizabeth, whose simple and tender heart was deeply moved, and in her joy she exclaimed, "I told you so indeed; we ought to make people as happy as possible." And she immediately started off to share in their joy.

Tender and saintly soul! how truly indeed you studied and comprehended that secret, so full of charms, the secret of the happiness of others; severe and unmerciful as you were towards yourself, you were fully initiated in this sweet mystery. That terrestrial happiness which you so completely renounced and excluded from your own life, you were able to find again, and with generous perservance to secure for your poor fellow creatures. Ah! how happy we are in the thought that in heaven, where now you are reaping the reward of so fervent a charity, you are still faithful to that loving solicitude which filled your heart while on earth! And how sweet it is for us to feel that poor souls who have recourse to you in their sorrow and want, here below, will not be abandoned by that inexhaustible pity, which can only have been intensified in strength and fervor by participating in your happy immortality.

CHAPTER XXVII

Dear St. Elizabeth learns from Master Conrad to overcome her own Will in all Things

Melior est obedientia quam victimae.

I Reg. XV, 22.

Wo to them who disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little ones, for the lowly gate of the heavenly Kingdom will not admit them to enter. — Imitation, Bk. III, Ch. LVIII, 10.

One might believe that there was nothing wanting in our Elizabeth to ensure her reaching the object which she had so courageously set before herself, the exclusive love of God, and of her fellow creatures in God, with an absolute contempt of the world and its riches. And yet, in this marvellous path of Christian perfection there were still formidable obstacles for her to overcome, many victories, and these the most difficult of all, for her to achieve. It was not sufficient for her to have conquered the world and all that it could offer her; it was still necessary that she should conquer herself in that most impregnable refuge of human weakness, her own will. It was necessary that that will, however pure, however detached it might be from earthly things, should no longer lift itself of its own strength, but that it should bend at each breath of the Divine Will, like a blade loaded with grain, until that moment when the Heavenly Reaper should gather it in for eternity.

He whom the Common Father of the Faithful had especially charged with the direction of this precious soul, Master Conrad of Marburg, who could appreciate all that

she was capable of for the love of God, resolved to lead her towards this supreme goal of evangelical perfection by a course which would doubtless be repugnant to what in our day we call wisdom, and still more so certainly to the infirmity and lukewarmness of our languishing souls, unaccustomed to all vigorous, practical faith; but which excited neither murmurs, nor even surprise at that period of naïve simplicity, of absolute resignation, at least in the intention, to whatsoever might lead and attach the soul to God.

Not that I undertake, however, to justify absolutely all I shall have to relate of Conrad's course towards his illustrious penitent; the impetuous ardor of his zeal, of which in the end he himself became the victim,[1] was such as to often carry him beyond the bounds of Christian moderation; but, aside from the fact that this course is authorized by numerous examples, in all periods of Christian piety, by the rules of many orders of renowned sanctity, I prefer, rather than rashly judge such a man, simply to imitate the submission, always so perfect, of that noble princess, eager to bend her head in all things beneath the yoke of divine love, and to follow the footsteps of Him who for our sake became obedient even unto death.

Master Conrad, then, having resolved to subdue and destroy in Elizabeth's soul the only element of human affection which he could still discover there, commenced by attacking her will in what was most legitimate and at the same time most deeply cherished by her,— the practice of works of mercy. He placed a check, cruel as it was to the heart of the Duchess, upon that generosity of which she had given, as we have just seen, such signal proofs, by forbidding her to give to any poor person more

[1] He was killed in 1233 by certain knights whom he had unjustly punished as heretics. Pope Gregory IX would not grant absolution to his murderers, except upon condition of a very severe penance.

than a single denier. Before resigning herself to so hard a restriction, Elizabeth endeavored in many roundabout ways to escape it, without being positively disobedient. She had a number of deniers coined, not of copper, as they usually were, but of silver, which were worth a shilling apiece in the money of the country;[1] these she distributed under the guise of ordinary deniers. Then, as the poor people, accustomed to her excessive liberality, complained of the parsimony of her gifts, she said to them: "I am forbidden to give you more than one denier at a time, but this does not prevent me from giving you another as often as you return." The beggars did not fail to profit by her suggestion, and after receiving a first alms, they would walk off, make one or two turns around the hospital, and then return to ask for another denier, which the Duchess always gave them; this trick they kept up incessantly. Instead of being touched by this little artifice of a soul consumed with charity, Conrad, having discovered what she was doing, abused her angrily several times, going so far as to lift his hand against her; but she suffered this outrage with joy, for it had long been her earnest desire to be closely united with her Divine Saviour in the outrages which He had borne before dying for her.

Conrad forbade her thereafter giving any money to the poor, under any form or pretext whatever; but he permitted her to distribute bread. Soon, however, as she found means of being too liberal in spite of this restriction, he directed her not to give them bread any longer in the loaf, but to serve it to them only in slices. Finally he forbade her giving any alms whatever, and left her no opportunity for exercising her ardent charity, except in

[1] Such, at least, is a very general tradition, supported by the name which during several centuries has been given to a silver coin called *Elisabethen pfennige, Elisabethen heller,* which is still found in many numismatic collections. Liebknecht, p. 55; Happel, *Concio II;* Justi.

the care of the sick and infirm; and, as we have seen, he had already taken the precaution to forbid her having any intercourse with those who were dearest to her, — the lepers; and when her compassion led her to transgress this prohibition, he did not hesitate to treat her with great severity and harshness.

One can imagine the grief of Elizabeth at seeing herself thus deprived of a liberty which, all through her life, had been so precious and so necessary to her; in seeing this barrier raised between her tender pity and the wants of the unfortunate. However, she understood the new duty which had come to take the place of all others; she understood that total abnegation of one's self, of which she had made a vow, must include the abnegation of everything that might offer the least enjoyment, or the least human consolation; and certainly alms-giving brought ineffable consolation to her. She knew how to make the sacrifice; she knew how to obey without murmuring, and she soon acquired great wisdom in that supreme science which for the Christian is the science of victory.[1]

No fatigue, no pain, seemed too severe to her when there was question of conforming herself to the will of him whom she was accustomed to regard as the representative to her of the Divine Will. No distance seemed too long for her to go in order to reach him without delay the moment he summoned her; and yet he adopted towards her none of those civilities which one would believe were demanded by her sex, her young age, and her rank; he endeavored rather to make the way of salvation for her rugged and thorny, that she might appear before her Judge adorned with greater merit. "This the saintly man did," says a French writer, "to conquer her will, so that she might consecrate all her love to God, and forget her former greatness. And in all things she was quick to

[1] Vir obediens loquetur victoriam. — Prov. xxi, 28.

obey and strong in suffering; and so she possessed her soul in patience, and her victory was ennobled by her obedience." [1]

This obedience was as prompt as it was complete, and extended to things of the least importance as well as to the gravest precepts. One day, as she was on her way to visit a hermit who lived in the vicinity of Marburg, Master Conrad sent a message to her to come back immediately; she returned at once, and said smilingly to the messenger, "If we are wise, we shall imitate the snail, who, when it rains, withdraws into its shell; let us obey then, and retrace our steps." She did not conceal the fear which her director inspired in her, not of himself, but as the vicar of God near her. "If I so fear a mortal man," she said to her companions, "how much more ought we not to tremble before God, who is the Lord and Judge of all men!" This fear, however, was wholly spiritual, for she had surrendered her will into the hands of Conrad, principally because he was poor and destitute of all human greatness, as she wished to be herself. "I have chosen," she remarked, "the life of the poor sisters, because it is the most despised of all; had I known one more so, I should have selected it. I might have made a vow of obedience to a bishop, or to a rich abbot; but I preferred Master Conrad, for he has nothing, he is but a beggar, and so I have no resources whatever in this life."

Whilst the Supreme Judge was weighing in His eternal balance this severity of His minister, and the invincible patience of His humble spouse, impious men found in these relations food for their malignity, and prepared for poor Elizabeth the opportunity of adding still another sacrifice to those she already had to offer to her Divine Spouse. After having decried her as a prodigal and a fool, and having loudly proclaimed that she had lost her mind,

[1] Jean Lefèvre.

these evil-minded men endeavored to tarnish her good name by infamous suspicions, and insolent suggestions as to her relations with Master Conrad. It was openly said that this priest had seduced the widow of the Duke Louis, and that he had brought her with him to his own country to share her riches there with her. The youth of the Duchess, who as we have seen was only twenty-two years of age when she retired to Marburg, was calculated to give the shadow of pretext to these calumnies. They appeared sufficiently serious to the faithful protector of Elizabeth, Sir Rudolph of Varila, to cause him to go and see her.

The trusty and prudent knight went to Marburg, and approaching her with great respect, said, "May I speak openly with you, madam, without sacrificing your respect?" Elizabeth humbly replied that she wished to hear all that he had to say. "I beg my dear lady then," he said, "to be careful of her good name, for her familiarity with Master Conrad has given rise, among ignorant and low-minded people, to evil opinions and to compromising talk."

Elizabeth, raising her eyes to heaven, without any visible expression of trouble in her countenance, replied: "Blessed in all things be our most sweet and holy Lord Jesus Christ, my only friend, Who deigns to receive from my hands this little offering; for love of Him, and to give myself to Him as His servant, I have renounced the nobility of my birth; I have despised my riches and my possessions; I have sacrificed the beauty of my youth; I have renounced my father, my country, my children, all the consolations of life; I have embraced absolute poverty. I had retained but one precious possession, my honor and my reputation as a woman. But now He asks that also of me, as I learn, and I give it to Him with all my heart, since He is pleased to accept, as a special sacrifice, that of my good name, and to render me pleasing in His sight by that ignominy. I consent to live henceforth only as a

dishonored woman. But O my dear Saviour! My poor children, who are yet innocent, deign to preserve them from any shame which might fall upon them because of me." Anxious, however, to reassure her old and devoted friend, she added, "As for you, at least, Sir Knight, you will entertain no suspicion of me." And she permitted him to know the severe character of the penitential life which she was leading under the direction of Conrad.

In the meantime the latter continued to exercise over her the unlimited authority which she had conceded him. He strove to crush and bruise her heart still more, to uproot every earthly affection, every human interest, that the love and the thought of God might take possession and dominate it completely. Of all the enjoyments of her past life Elizabeth had retained only the sweet and ancient custom of living with the friends of her youth, who had shared with her the dignities of her life as sovereign, in the capacity of maids of honor; who had eaten with her the bread of misery, at the time of her expulsion from Wartburg; and who finally, inseparable and faithful companions, had been associated with her in all her voluntary privations of the religious life, in all her works of mercy, and in her penances and practices of piety. Unknown perhaps to her, the relations of tender and intimate sympathy which existed between Elizabeth and these faithful friends had been the means of mitigating for her much of the bitterness, and of lightening oftentimes the weight of so many mortifications and trials; and this young heart, which we have seen always consumed with love, and, as it were, inundated with a charity ever ready to overflow upon all mankind, must have yielded itself without reserve to this sweet and pious consolation. There could be no intimacy more perfect or more affectionate than that which existed between the Princess and her companions, as revealed in every line of their recitals con-

cerning her.[1] It was this last sweet link that Conrad resolved to break, fearing their conversations might awaken in the heart of the Duchess regretful memories of her past greatness. He had already dismissed, one after another, all the persons of her former household who had remained with her, and it had been impossible for her to witness their departure without expressing the liveliest sorrow. Then he came to these sweet friends of hers. It was Ysentrude's turn first, she whom Elizabeth loved best, and from whom she concealed nothing; to whom she had revealed the secret thoughts of her soul, both before and after her retirement from the world. "She was obliged, however, to see me driven away," relates this faithful friend, "Ysentrude, whom she loved above all the others; and she could not permit me to depart without great anguish of heart and many tears."[2] Guta, who had been the companion of her infancy from the time that she was five years old, and had never since left her, and whom she likewise loved most tenderly, was sent away last, amid the tears and sobs of poor Elizabeth. A pious historian, whom we take pleasure in quoting, says of this occurrence, "It seemed to her that her heart was broken, and the docile servant of God never wholly recovered from this sorrow to the hour of her death. Every faithful heart will comprehend this, for surely there is no greater pain in the world than that of two faithful hearts which are torn from one another. O dear Saint Elizabeth! I recall to your memory this separation, and in the name of the

[1] In the depositions which they were called upon to make before the judges commissioned by the Pope to examine into the sanctity of Elizabeth. This is the most authentic, as well as the most copious source, from which we are enabled to draw our information, following the example of Theodoric and all the other historians of the Saint.

[2] Et tandem me Ysentrudem, ei praedilectam, ab ipsa expulit, quae cum multo cordis gravamine et infinitis lacrymis me dimisit.

cruel sorrow which you suffered then with your dearest friends, obtain for me the grace to understand the wrong that I have done in so often separating myself from my God by sin!"[1]

The victim, left thus alone with the God to Whom she had consecrated herself, was not permitted to have even the consolation of this solitude undisturbed. Conrad replaced her dear companions with two women of a very different kind. One was a young woman of humble birth, devout enough, named Elizabeth like the Duchess herself, but exceedingly rough and common, and so horribly ugly that she was a terror to the children. The other was a widow, aged, deaf, of a sour and peevish temperament, always discontented and ill-natured. Elizabeth resigned herself, for the love of Christ, with perfect submission to these painful changes in her daily life; and always distrustful of herself, strove to advance in humility by her relations with the coarse peasant, and in patience by submitting to the abuse of the irritable old woman. She was constantly tried, and subjected to ill-treatment from both of them. Instead of offering to relieve her when she took upon herself, through a spirit of penance, the domestic cares and work which it was their duty to perform, they left her, on the contrary, to do the hardest work, such as sweeping the house; and when, while watching the kitchen fire, the Princess, absorbed in her religious contemplations, neglected the scanty dishes that were cooking, and her servants smelt them burning, they did not hesitate to reprimand her sharply, and reproached her for not knowing even how to make a soup; and yet, as the biographer whom we have before quoted says, "she never in her life had learned to cook." These same women denounced her unmercifully to Conrad whenever she bestowed any alms contrary to his prohibition, which her

[1] Kochem, p. 829.

compassionate heart found it so painful to submit to, and in this way they drew upon her severe correction from her director. But nothing could make her unfaithful for an instant, even by the slightest manifestation of impatience, to the inviolable vow of submission which she had made to him who was intrusted, as it seemed to her, with the care of leading her quickly and safely to her eternal home. Her docility was so scrupulous that when her old and intimate friends came to see her she did not dare to offer them any refreshment, or even to greet them, without having asked Conrad's permission.

A last severe trial was yet in store for this soul, so full of tenderness, and at the same time so austere in dealing with her own affections; it was to be for her a final triumph. We have seen how she had separated herself from her children, whom she loved with an intensity which divine love alone could overcome. It seems that this separation had not been complete or absolute, that the voice of the maternal heart had made itself heard; that if she did not keep one of her daughters with her, or perhaps her son, as we might infer from certain expressions of her biographers, she at least had one of these dear children come often to her, that in seeing and caressing him, and impressing many kisses upon his innocent forehead, she might satisfy the cravings of maternal love. But she soon discovered that there was no longer room in her heart for two loves, that she could not with impunity divide it between God and any creature whatever. She saw that these caresses and kisses which she lavished upon her offspring prevented her from giving herself with her accustomed assiduity to prayer; she feared lest she might give too much love to any other being than God; and whether at the instigation of Master Conrad, or of her own motion, she put away from her forever this last vestige of earthly happiness.

So many supernatural victories of that divine grace which Elizabeth recognized as her one absolute sovereign could not long remain unknown; it was not in heaven alone that an ineffable reward awaited her. Men themselves began at length to render homage to this heroine of faith and charity, and to recompense those children, forsaken for the love of God, by bestowing upon them the affectionate veneration which an age of faith could not refuse to the offspring of a saint. It was but a few years after, that at a plenary court held at Saumur by King Louis IX of France, there appeared a young German prince aged eighteen; he served at the same time as the Counts of Saint-Pol and Boulogne at the table of the Queen, the Queen of France, who at all times was for the knights of the Middle Ages the type of beauty and womanly nobility; and that queen was then Blanche of Castile. The court attendants would point him out with admiration as the son of St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, and then tell how Queen Blanche often embraced him with great devotion, seeking, as it were, on his young forehead traces of the kisses which his mother had once imprinted there. Thus it was that the mother of a saint rendered homage to the son of a saint. In that loving, devout kiss may we not picture the meeting of two souls who have indeed, for all eternity, met before God,—the tender, fervent and pure souls of St. Louis of France and St. Elizabeth of Hungary?

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Lord shows forth His Power and Mercy through the Intercession of Dear St. Elizabeth; the Wonderful Efficacy of her Prayers

Fecit mihi magna qui potens est.
Luke I, 49.

Voluntatem timentium se faciet, et deprecationem eorum exaudiet.
Ps. CXLIV, 19.

The time was approaching when Elizabeth was to receive, in the bosom of her God, the eternal reward of the trials of her short life; but before calling her to Himself, to participate in His glory, it pleased the Almighty to surround her, while yet on earth, with a halo of celestial glory, to invest her, in the eyes of men who had persecuted and calumniated her, with a power emanating from His own, and to bestow upon this feeble woman, who had so completely conquered in herself our fallen nature, a supernatural strength to overcome and banish from among her fellow creatures all the miseries which follow in the path of sin.

It will no longer be only by her deep compassion, her affectionate sympathy, her boundless generosity, her toilsome labors and devotedness that we shall see her relieving the miseries of the unfortunate and bearing her part in all their burdens; that divine charity which overcometh all things, and which had become her very life, will often receive from on high such expansion and power that a single word, a single prayer escaping from her lips, will

dissipate and dispel forever the sufferings which before she could only share and alleviate. Henceforth when devotion or charity leads her forth from her humble home, it will no longer be her own compassion alone that we shall have to admire, but oftentimes all that merciful power which the Lord is pleased to delegate to the souls of His choice; and the new blessings which we shall thus see her scattering in her path, the most touching details of which have been carefully treasured in the memory of the Christian people, will be for us a final and a most glorious proof of her sanctity.

No day passed without her twice visiting her poor invalids at the hospital, and bringing with her the supplies and food which she had provided for them. One morning, at the entrance of this hospital, she saw lying at the threshold of the door a crippled and deformed young boy, stretched out motionless; he was a deaf mute child, whose members had been twisted and contorted by a cruel malady, so that he could only drag himself along on his hands and feet like an animal. His mother, who was ashamed of him, had brought him to this place and left him there, hoping that the good Duchess would have pity on him. And indeed the moment she perceived him, she gazed at him with an anxious look, and felt herself pierced with sorrow. Bending over him she said, "Tell me, dear child, where are your parents? Who brought you here?" But as the child did not seem to understand her, she repeated the question in a sweet voice, caressing him and saying to him, "What's the matter with you; won't you speak to me?" The child looked at her, but made no reply. Elizabeth, not knowing that he was mute, imagined that he was possessed with an evil spirit, and feeling her pity intensified, she said to him in a loud voice, "In the name of the Lord I command you, both you and him that is in you, to answer and tell me where you come from?" The

child immediately stood up straight before her, his speech was suddenly restored to him, and he said, "My mother brought me here." He then told her that he had never spoken nor heard until that moment, that he was born as she saw him, crippled and helpless in his whole body. "But see," he exclaimed, extending his members one after the other, "see, God has given me the power of motion, of speech and hearing. I speak words that I have never learned or heard from any one." And he began to cry and to thank God. "I did not know God," said he; "all my senses were dead. I did not know what a man was. Now, for the first time, I feel that I am no longer like a brute; I can now speak of God. Blessed be that question from your lips that obtained for me from God the grace not to die as I have lived till now!" At these words, which portrayed in so touching a manner the first emotions of a soul in which one all-powerful word had awakened thoughts of God and of itself, Elizabeth recognized that God had wrought a miracle through her intercession; but troubled and terrified at the thought of her being the medium of this divine interposition, she fell at once upon her knees and mingled her tears in abundance with those of the child whom she had saved. After having thanked God with him for this favor, she said to him: "Return now quickly to your parents, and do not tell what has happened; especially do not speak of me to any one; simply say that God has relieved you; and guard yourself well, night and day, against all mortal sin, for otherwise your malady may come upon you again. Never forget what you have heretofore suffered, and pray for me always, as I shall pray for you." She hurried away, as if to escape from this unexpected glory; but at that moment the child's mother made her appearance, and astonished at seeing him standing up and speaking, she exclaimed, "Who gave you the power of speech?" To which the

child replied, "A sweet lady in a gray dress commanded me in the name of Jesus Christ to speak to her, and I found I was able to answer her." The mother ran in the direction that Elizabeth had taken, and catching sight of her as she disappeared in the distance, recognized who she was; and she proclaimed the miracle everywhere.

Thus, in spite of Elizabeth's humility, reports of the power which God had conferred upon her spread far and wide, and drew to her the supplications of the unfortunate and the afflicted. Her invincible compassion would never permit her to refuse assistance to those who invoked her; nor did she ever, in the midst of the wonderful graces which the Almighty poured out through her hands, forget for a moment that profound and fervent humility which above all things rendered her agreeable in His sight. One day a sick man came to ask her to cure him in the name of the dear Apostle St. John, for whom, as we have seen, she had a special devotion. After she had prayed for him he felt himself cured, and immediately threw himself upon his knees before her to thank her; but she at once knelt beside him, and thanked God for having heard the prayers of His dear Apostle St. John. And yet, says the writer from whom we have drawn this account, it was her prayers that God heard, as well as those of St. John.

On another occasion a poor cripple, who had the use of neither hands nor feet, cried out to her, "O brilliant sun, resplendent among all women! I am from Reinhartsbrunn, where thy husband reposes; for the love of his soul, come to my help and heal me." At the name of her husband, moved by the memory of his sweet and holy love, she stopped and gazed with infinite tenderness on him who had thus appealed to her; and at that moment, by that look alone, the cripple found himself healed. She at once returned thanks to her Lord.

Some time afterwards, as she was on her way to the

convent of Aldenburg, a poor man called out at a distance and said to her, "For twelve years I have been possessed with an evil spirit; let me touch the hem of thy garment, and he will be compelled to leave me." Turning quickly, she went and knelt by his side in the middle of the road, and embracing him she blessed him in the name of Jesus Christ; and the afflicted man immediately found himself delivered.

She was one day visiting, at about midday, the church which she had built for her hospital. It was the hour which she herself preferred for going there, as at that time all the faithful were away, engaged at their noonday meal, and she could consequently attend to her devotions without interruption.[1] She saw there a blind man all alone, groping his way about the church; his eyes were open like other people's, but the pupils were dull and sightless. She went to him at once and asked him what he was doing there all alone, and why he was wandering about the church in that way. He replied, "I wanted to find that dear lady who consoles poor people, to ask her to give me some alms in the name of God; but I came into this church first to say my prayers, and I am making the round of the church to find out how large it is, for I have the misfortune of not being able to see it with my eyes." "Would you like to see this church?" said the compassionate Elizabeth. "If God willed it, I should love very much to see it, but I have been blind from my birth; I have never seen the light of the sun; I have become God's prisoner." Then he began to rehearse all his troubles. "I would have been glad to be able to work, like others," he said, "for I am of no use to any one, nor to myself; the shortest hours seem to me very long; when I am with other men who can see, I cannot help committing the sin

[1] As is known, it is still the custom in Italy and Belgium, and in parts of Germany, to close the church from noon to three o'clock.

of envy; if I am all alone, I weep over my misfortune; for I cannot pray all the time, and even when I am praying I cannot help thinking about it constantly." "It is for your own good," replied Elizabeth, "that God sent you this affliction; you might perhaps have been led into excesses; you would have sinned more than you do now." "O no!" replied the blind man, "I should have guarded against sin; I should have given myself up to a life of hard work, and I should not have had the sad thoughts which I have now." Elizabeth, overcome with pity, then said to him, "Pray God to let you see the light, and I will pray to Him with you." At these words the blind man suddenly realized that it was the saintly Duchess Elizabeth who was speaking to him, and falling on his face before her, he cried out, "Ah! noble and compassionate lady, have pity on me!" But she urged him again to pray to God with perfect confidence, and kneeling herself at a little distance, she began to pray fervently. Instantly the blind man received his sight, and eyes of celestial beauty appeared in the orbits that before were hollow and sightless. He rose, looked around him, and hastened towards Elizabeth. "Madam," he said, "God be praised; His grace has been propitious to me; I can see clearly and perfectly; your words have come true." But the pious Princess, who always united with her charity the prudent solicitude of a mother, replied, "Now that your sight has been given you, let your aim be to serve God and to avoid sin; be an industrious and upright man, humble and faithful in all things."

The prayers of this humble servant of the Lord, so powerful in obtaining from Him relief for the ills of the body, were not less so in securing the salvation of souls.

Madam Gertrude de Leinbach, wife of a noble knight of the vicinity, came one day to visit the Duchess, bringing with her her son Berthold, a young man of about twelve

or fourteen, who was magnificently attired, and seemed greatly pleased with the beauty and elegance of his clothes. Elizabeth, after conversing for some time with his mother, turned to him and said, "My dear child, you appear to me to dress in much too worldly and sumptuous a manner; you think too much of serving the world. Why do you not think rather of serving your Creator? You would find yourself better, both in soul and body, by doing so. Tell me, dear child, do you believe that your Lord and mine wore such clothes when He came in all humility to shed His blood for us?" The young man replied, "O madam, I beg you to pray for me, that the Lord may grant me the grace to serve Him!" "Do you really wish me to pray for you?" she said. "Yes, certainly." "Then you must prepare yourself to receive the grace which you desire, and I will most willingly pray for you. Let us go to the church and ask for it, both of us." He followed her at once to the church, and prostrated himself before the altar, his mother with him, at a little distance from where Elizabeth herself knelt to pray. After they had been engaged in prayer for some time, the young man cried out in a loud voice, "O dear lady, cease your prayers!" But Elizabeth nevertheless continued to pray with fervor. Berthold then began to cry out still louder, "Cease, madam, your prayers. I cannot endure it any longer, my whole body is on fire." In fact an intense heat penetrated him, and his whole body seemed to be in a glow. His mother and two attendants of the Duchess running to him, on hearing his cries, found that his clothes were saturated with perspiration, and his skin so hot that they could scarcely touch it. However, Elizabeth continued her prayers without interruption, until finally the young man in despair called out to her, "In the name of the Lord, I beg of you not to pray any more. I am consumed with an interior fire, and feel as though my heart

were breaking within me." Then she ceased her prayers, and Berthold gradually regained his composure; but the fire of divine love, which Elizabeth's ardent charity had caused to descend into his young heart, was never extinguished, and shortly afterwards he entered the Order of St. Francis.

Similar examples drew to Elizabeth a great number of suffering souls, who sought the powerful mediation of her prayers. She listened to their requests in a spirit of devout humility, and many, like young Berthold, obtained through her intercessions the light and peace which they desired, and embraced the religious life. This sweet and beneficent influence extended beyond the bourn of this life. This efficacious help was implored by the souls who had not yet expiated all their faults. One night she saw in a dream her mother, Queen Gertrude, who several years before had been basely assassinated. She came and knelt by her, and said, "My dear daughter, beloved of God, I beseech you to pray for me, for I have yet to expiate the errors of my life. Remember the pain which I suffered in bringing you into the world, and have pity on my present sufferings; ask God to abridge them, and to have regard to the ignominious death which I suffered, although innocent, rather than to my sins. You can if you will, for you are full of grace in His eyes." Elizabeth awoke in tears, rose from her bed, and betook herself at once to prayer; after praying fervently for the soul of her mother, she again retired and fell asleep. Her mother again appeared to her, and said, "Blessed be the day and the hour that I brought you into the world; your prayer has obtained my deliverence; to-morrow I shall enter into eternal happiness. But pray always for those whom you love, for God will comfort all who invoke you in their sufferings." Elizabeth again awoke, her heart filled with joy because of the vision, and shed tears of gratitude; then, being

fatigued, she fell into a sleeep so heavy that she did not hear the bells for Matins of the Brothers Minor, to which she was accustomed to go, and did not wake till the hour of Prime. She went at once to confess her slothfulness, and requested her director to impose a penance upon her for it.

This voice, so earnest and so powerful in obtaining divine mercy, was sometimes equally so in securing justice. On one of her excursions Elizabeth, who was rightfully called the nurse of the people, found a poor woman in labor. She immediately had her taken to the hospital, and saw that every possible care was bestowed upon her. She wished to become godmother to the child which this woman brought into the world, and gave it her own sweet name of Elizabeth. She went every day to visit the mother, comforted her, and brought all sorts of assistance to her. After thus nursing her for a month, until she had entirely recovered, she supplied the poor woman with provisions and gave her twelve Cologne deniers, a cloak, and shoes and stockings, which she took from her own feet for that purpose; wrapping the little infant in fur, which she took from the cloak of one of her companions. But this unnatural mother, instead of being touched by the generous treatment she had received, thought only of how she might secure its continuation, and after having bid good-by to the Duchess in the evening, left early in the morning with her husband, abandoning her child. In the meantime Elizabeth, to whom the thought of her dear poor was ever present, said to one of her attendants as she entered the church, before Matins, "I have a little money in my purse, which will be a help to that poor mother and her child; go and give it to her."

But the attendant returned and told her that the woman had gone, leaving the child. "Run quickly and get it and bring it to me," said the good Elizabeth, "lest

it be neglected." The sentiment of justice now made itself felt in this heart so full of pity; she sent for the municipal magistrate, and directed him to send soldiers out on the various roads in quest of the mother. They returned without finding her. Elizabeth then had recourse to prayer, and one of her attendants, who dreaded the severity of Master Conrad should he hear of what had taken place, suggested to her mistress that she should ask God to grant that the ungrateful mother might be discovered. She replied, "I can only ask of God that His will be done." Shortly afterwards the husband and wife appeared, threw themselves at the feet of the Duchess, and asked pardon for their fault; they declared at the same time that they had felt themselves stopped on their way by an invisible force, which absolutely prevented their going farther, and compelled them to turn back. No one doubted that this was the effect of the prayers of the Duchess. They took from the unworthy mother all that had been given her, to distribute among other more deserving poor people; but Elizabeth, in whose heart pity had quickly regained its sway, saw to it that other shoes and garments were given her.

In the midst, however, of so many remarkable proofs of her power before God, her extreme humility sometimes took on the appearance of a sort of distrust of the divine mercy. At times she experienced those moments of discouragement and interior darkness in which souls, the most advanced in Christian perfection, succumb beneath the weight of their mortal life; and then her heart, always consumed with love, dared to doubt whether she would find in God a love proportional to that which she had concentrated wholly and entirely in Him. Her former confessor, Father Rodinger of Wurtzburg, having come to visit her, she went to walk with him on the banks of the Lahn, accompanied by three attendants. In

her intimate conversations with this old friend, who doubtless inspired her with less fear than Conrad, she said to him, "There is one thing that torments me more than all else, Reverend Father, and that is, I doubt sometimes the affection of my Creator for me; not but that He is infinitely good and always prodigal of His love, but because of my many defects which must render me very displeasing, although I am inflamed with love for Him." "There is nothing to fear," the Father replied, "for the divine goodness is so great that it is impossible to doubt that God loves those who love Him infinitely more than He is loved by them." "How then is it," Elizabeth asked, "that He permits sadness and languor of soul to separate me for one moment from Him to whom I long to be united always?" The religious answered her that that was the mark of an elect soul rather than of one abandoned, and a certain means of strengthening love; and pointing out a beautiful tree which stood on the opposite bank of the river, he told her it was more likely that it would of its own motion cross over to the side on which they were walking than that God in His love should be outdone by any of His creatures. He had hardly uttered these words when the astonished attendants beheld the tree of which he had spoken cross the river and change its position from one side to the other. At this wonderful sign of divine love, Elizabeth recognized the power and eternal truth of Him who said to his disciples: *If you had faith like to a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree: Be thou rooted up, and be thou transplanted into the sea, and it would obey you.* And she immediately threw herself at the feet of Father Rodinger, to confess her sin of distrust, and to obtain pardon therefor.

To give to prayer the invincible power which, as we have thus seen, hers possessed, Elizabeth had found no better means than the constant practice of this supreme virtue;

and in spite of her many and fatiguing works of mercy, which were quite sufficient to occupy all her time, she gave long hours to meditation and prayer. She possessed the happy faculty of uniting the active with the contemplative life. After having, like Martha, provided with laborious solicitude for the wants of Jesus Christ in the person of His poor, she came, like Mary, to seat herself at the feet of her Lord, that she might lose herself there in the contemplation of His graces and His mercy. "I swear before God," wrote her severe confessor to the Sovereign Pontiff, "that I have rarely seen a woman so contemplative." She would often remain for several hours continuously at prayer, her eyes, her hands, and her heart raised to heaven. She often spent a part of the night in church, despite the prohibition of Conrad, who did not wish her to deprive herself of necessary rest. As she did not always find herself sufficiently alone or free in the churches of Marburg, she loved to go and say her prayers in the fields, under the roof of heaven, in the midst of that nature whose every feature reminded her of the grandness and the goodness of her Creator. There is a tradition that when it rained, whilst she was thus praying in the open air, the water fell all around, but not upon her.[1] Her favorite resort on these pious excursions was near a beautiful fountain situated in a cluster of trees at the foot of a steep mountain, a short distance from the village of Schroeck, two leagues from Marburg. As the road leading thereto was steep and dangerous, she had a paved highway built, and erected a little chapel near this pure spring. This rural solitude soon received the name of *Elizabeth's Fountain*, which it still bears to this day.[2]

[1] Tradition recounts the same miracle of St. Peter of Alcantara.

[2] The site is one of the most charming in this beautiful country. The village of Schroeck is still Catholic, having belonged to the Archbishopric of Mentz until the year 1802. The fountain is still in

The worst weather did not prevent her from visiting this cherished retreat. She prayed constantly on the way, but during the whole trip from Marburg to the fountain she recited only one *Our Father*, so full was her prayer of reflection and meditation.[1] She assisted with devotion and exemplary diligence at all the divine offices; she had an affectionate veneration for the Saints of God; she listened with devout interest to the reading of their lives, and reverenced their relics with tender respect, keeping lighted candles and burning incense constantly before them. After her especially beloved St. John the Evangelist, she had a peculiar affection for St. Mary Magdalen. The Blessed Virgin was naturally the object of her fervent veneration; she always had with her four images of the Queen of Heaven, which she kept till her death, and which she bequeathed to her eldest daughter Sophia.[2]

existence; but in place of Elizabeth's chapel, there is a sort of classic temple, of the Doric and Ionic order, built in 1596 by a Protestant Landgrave, with a very long and most ridiculous inscription in classic style. It commences thus: —

Si viator, quis sum, quidve portem quaeris ?
Fons sum divae Elisabeth . . .
Ad me venit saepius
Deoque, naturae et mihi grata, etc.

[1] Justi, p. 263. He adds that in the country about Marburg the peasants recall this fact as an example to their children who stammer while reciting their prayers.

[2] Wadding, *Ann.*, II, 224. Juste Lipse, *Diva Virgo Hallensis*. Sophia, afterwards Duchess of Brabant, carried these four images with her to Belgium; one of them was placed at Vilvorde, and became celebrated for its miracles under the name of *Our Lady of Consolation;* a second at Gravesande; the third with the Carmelites at Haarlem; and the fourth in the beautiful Gothic church of Halle, near Brussels, where it is still to-day the object of public veneration and of many pilgrimages. Juste Lipse, who was, as is well known, one of the most illustrious scholars of the sixteenth century, did not disdain to consecrate a special work to the history of this image, under the title of

And yet she was far from attaching a too great importance to these symbols of exterior devotion, and understood perfectly how to distinguish the purely material value to be found in them from the pure and spiritual sentiment which faith assigns them. Thus having gone one day to visit a convent of monks, the religious, numbering about twenty-four, were gathered around her, and were pointing out with some degree of satisfaction the richly gilded sculptures with which their church was ornamented, when she said to them, "Really you would have done better to use the money which this has cost you in clothing and maintaining yourselves rather than in decorating these walls; for you ought to carry all this sculpture in your hearts."[1] She was not less severe upon herself; for one day when some one was vaunting the beauty of an image, urging her to buy it, she said, "I have no need of such an image, for I carry it in my heart." It was the same spirit that dominated the soul of one of her most illustrious contemporaries, though of a very different character from hers, Simon, Count of Montfort, of whom St. Louis related with admiration to Joinville that when they came and told him "that he should come and see the body of our Lord, which had become flesh and blood in the hands of the priest, at which they were greatly amazed, the Count said to them, 'Go you and see, who doubt. As for me, I believe perfectly and without doubt. . . . And because of my belief I hope to have a crown in heaven greater than that of the angels, for they see face to face, and therefore must believe.'"

The image of God was indeed too deeply graven on the

Diva Virgo Hallensis; and to it he bequeathed his pen when he had ceased writing.

[1] Dict. IV Ancill. 2031. This reply obtained for our Saint the questionable honor of being cited with praise by Luther in his *Tischreden.*

heart of Elizabeth, too perpetually present to her love, for her to need those helps which the Church, with generous compassion, offers to ordinary souls. Dwelling constantly in the presence of God, and ravished by the contemplation of His august mysteries, she lost sight of the imperfect figures, which human imagination could offer her, of the objects of her faith.

The nearer she approached the end of her brief career on earth, the more her prayers were transformed into ecstasies and raptures, and the more these marvellous interruptions of mortal life were prolonged in her, as if to prepare her by a sweet transition for her entrance into life eternal. Towards the end, during many hours every day, she thus left this world of sorrow and trouble to taste in advance the joys of heaven. The number of revelations, visions, and supernatural visitations which she had on these occasions was immense; and although she endeavored generally to keep these immortal favors hidden, she could not wholly conceal them from those who lived with her; her joy and often gratitude betrayed her, and the existence of these miraculous communications was always regarded as an incontestable fact by her contemporaries. The angels of the Lord were the usual messengers between heaven and this elect soul; they not only gave her information and divine instruction, but came also to console her in all her trials, and even in the transitory accidents of her temporal life. On one occasion, among others, when Elizabeth had received into her house a poor sick woman and tenderly cared for her, the unfortunate creature, having recovered, disappeared early one morning, taking with her all the clothes of her benefactress, who, having nothing else to put on, was obliged to remain in bed. But far from being impatient or complaining, she simply said, "My dear Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast permitted me to become thus like Thyself; for Thou came into the

world naked and stripped of everything, and thus Thou wast nailed to the Cross." Immediately, as happened on a previous occasion when she had given all her clothes to the poor, an angel appeared with a beautiful garment which he gave her, saying, "I do not bring you a crown, as I did before, for God Himself wishes to crown you soon in His glory."

But Jesus Himself also, the Divine Spouse of her soul, the Supreme Guide of her life, often appeared to her, face to face, accompanied by a host of saints. He consoled her by His sweet words and fortified her by His look.

At the conclusion of these heavenly visitations, her face, according to the words of the grave Conrad, shone with a marvellous light, a reflection of the Divine splendor that had burst upon her, and her beautiful eyes shot forth glances as brilliant as the rays of the sun. Those only who were not in mortal sin could look upon her without being dazzled. If these ecstasies were prolonged during several hours, she drew from them such strength that for a long time afterwards she needed no food of any kind. The nourishment of the soul which she had received sufficed for her sustenance. During the rest of the day she lived only in Him in Whom she had been transformed by love; she had no other words to express the state in which these celestial visits left her than those of the sacred text: *My soul melted when my Beloved spoke to me.*

And thus it was that the prophetic inspiration was fulfilled, which led her, while yet a little child, to choose as her patron, friend, and model the blessed evangelist who had received the *prerogative of love*, and who whilst reposing on the breast of the Saviour read there all the secrets of heaven.[1]

[1] Hic est beatissimus evangelista . . . qui privilegio amoris . . . meruit honorari. Iste est Johannes qui supra pectus Domini recubuit, beatus Apostolus, cui revelata sunt secreta celestia. — *Roman Breviary.*

A divine joy was diffused over her whole life, her whole being; no tribulation or trial could disturb the peace and sweetness which it brought her. She never appeared troubled or irritated; but her cheerfulness, on the contrary, increased under adversities. Those who saw her closely could never distinguish the expression of any pain whatever on her face; and yet she wept incessantly, and the gift of holy tears which she had received from her cradle had become more and more abundant as she approached the close of her life. The happier she was, the more she wept; but these tears flowed as it were from a tranquil and hidden source, without ever wrinkling her face, or marring in the least her pure beauty or the serenity of her features; they but added another charm; it was the last pouring out of a heart to which no words were longer sufficient. Indeed, as in other days, the tears of anguish that were forced from her eyes by human love, and by cruel persecutions, so now these tears of supernatural joy which she permitted to fall into the chalice of her life were gathered, drop by drop, by her Celestial Spouse and became the pearls of an eternal crown, which He had prepared for her in heaven.[1]

[1] Theodoric adds that he had many more details that he might relate concerning her, but that the fear of being too prolix imposed silence upon him.

CHAPTER XXIX

How Dear St. Elizabeth, at the Age of Twenty-Four Years, was invited to the Eternal Nuptial

Jam hiems transiit, imber abiit et recessit; surge amica mea, speciosa mea, et veni. Veni sponsa mea, et coronaberis. — Cant. II, 11, 13.

Two years had scarcely elapsed since the humble Elizabeth had, in the habit of St. Francis, clothed herself with strength to despise all the joys of life and to advance heavenward over a path strewn with so many thorns; and the Lord had already found the trial long enough, the laborious task which she had imposed upon herself sufficiently achieved. "He ordained that she who had despised an earthly kingdom should possess a kingdom among the angels." Like the Divine Spouse in the canticle, He came to announce to His beloved that the sad winter of her life, with all its storms, had passed over, and the morning of an eternal springtime was about to dawn upon her. The year 1231 was drawing to a close, the year in which the Order of St. Francis had given to heaven the great St. Anthony of Padua, the glory of Portugal and of Italy;[1] and the Almighty, solicitous to increase yet more the army of His Saints, was about to demand from it another sacrifice, and to pluck its most beautiful flower. One night, as Elizabeth was lying in bed, half asleep, while yet her thoughts were given to prayer, our Lord appeared to her surrounded by a heavenly light, and in a

[1] He died June 13, 1231.

most sweet voice said to her, "Come, Elizabeth, my betrothed, my tender friend, my well beloved, come with me to the tabernacle that I have prepared for you from all eternity; I myself will conduct you there." As soon as she awoke, filled with joy at the thought of this approaching deliverance, she hastened to make all her preparations for this happy journey; she made the necessary arrangements for her funeral and interment; she went to assist for the last time all her poor and all her sick; she blessed them all with great joy, and distributed among them and her attendants everything that she had left to give. Master Conrad was at that very time afflicted with a severe illness, from which he suffered excruciating pains. He sent for his docile penitent, and she hastened immediately to him, faithful to the end in her mission as friend and comforter of the sick. He received her affectionately, and she expressed great sorrow at finding him suffering thus. "What will become of you, madam and dear daughter," he said, "when I am dead? How will you regulate your life? Who will be your protector against the wicked, and who will lead you to God?" She replied at once: "Your question is unnecessary; I shall die before you do; believe me, I shall have no need of any other protector than you."

The fourth day after this interview she felt the first symptoms of the illness which was to terminate the prolonged death of her earthly existence, and open the way for her to a real and eternal life. She found herself compelled to go to bed, where for fourteen or fifteen days she lingered, a victim to a violent fever, but always cheerful and light-hearted, and constantly occupied with her prayers. At the end of that time, one day, as she seemed to be sleeping, her face turned towards the wall of her chamber, one of her attendants, named like herself Elizabeth, who was seated by the side of her bed, heard what

seemed to be a sweet and exquisite melody that escaped from the invalid's throat. A moment later the Duchess changed her position, and turning towards her companion, said, "Where are you, my beloved?" "I am here," replied the attendant, adding, "Oh! madam, how deliciously you sang!" "What," replied Elizabeth, "did you, too, hear something?" Being answered in the affirmative, she continued: "I will tell you; a charming little bird came and placed himself between me and the wall, and there he sang to me for a long time in such soft and sweet notes, and my heart and soul were so rejoiced, that I could not help singing myself.[1] He revealed to me that I should die in three days." It was undoubtedly her guardian angel, says one of the early writers, who came in the form of a little bird, to announce to her eternal joy.

From that moment, having so little time before her to prepare for her last struggle, she wished no secular person to be admitted to her room, not even the noble ladies who were accustomed to visit her. All those who were in the habit of coming frequently to see her, she dismissed after blessing them for the last time. Besides her attendants, the only persons she had near her were a few religious, who were especially attached to her, her confessor, and the little poor boy who had taken the place, in her compassionate solicitude, of the young leper whom Conrad had sent away. When she was asked why she thus excluded every one, she replied, "I wish to remain alone with God, and to meditate upon the terrible day of my judgment, and upon my omnipotent judge." And she wept as she prayed and invoked the mercy of God.

[1] According to the contemporaneous account published by Martine and Durand in their *Amplissima Collectio*, Vol. I, p. 1254, her daughter also heard this singing; and this is the only record we have indicating the presence of one of her children during the last hours of her life.

On Sunday, the eve of the Octave of St. Martin (November 18, 1231), after Matins, she went to confession to Conrad, who had sufficiently recovered to attend her. She took her heart in her hands, says a contemporaneous manuscript, and read all that she found there; but there was nothing of which she could accuse herself, nothing which the most sincere contrition had not a thousand times cleansed away. When she had finished her confession, Conrad asked her what her last wishes were regarding her goods and possessions. "I am surprised," she answered, "at your asking me such a question, for you know that when I made a vow of obedience to you, I renounced all my possessions, at the same time that I gave up my own will, and my children, and all earthly pleasures. I have kept nothing save what was necessary according to your directions to pay debts and distribute alms; I would have preferred, with your permission, to renounce everything and live in a cell with the daily pittance that other poor people receive. For a long time past all that I have appeared to possess has in reality belonged to the poor; distribute, therefore, among them all that I leave, except this old worn habit, in which I wish to be buried. I make no will; I have no other heir than Jesus Christ." But as one of her companions begged that she would bequeath to her some souvenir, she gave her the poor cloak of her father, St. Francis, which the Pope had sent her. "I leave you," she said, "my cloak; do not mind its being torn, patched, and wretched; it is the most precious treasure that I have ever possessed. I assure you that whenever I have wanted to obtain a special grace from my beloved Jesus, and have said my prayers wearing this cloak, He has always vouchsafed graciously to hear my petitions." She then asked to be buried in the church of the hospital which she had built and dedicated to St. Francis. She had no other sugges-

tion to offer as to the obsequies to be performed for her on earth, so wholly absorbed was she in the anticipation of her entry into heaven. After she had conversed for a long time with Conrad, and Mass had been said for her, about the hour of Prime, the last sacraments, for which she was devoutly longing, were brought to her. Who can know and tell with what sincere tenderness, what purity of heart, what ardent desire, what celestial joy, she received this sweet repast? He alone, certainly, who was pleased to serve her as Guide and Viaticum in this last journey. But what was outwardly manifest was sufficient to reveal to those who were near her the presence of the divine grace which filled her soul. After receiving Extreme Unction, and then Holy Communion,[1] she remained silent and motionless during the entire day, until the hour for Vespers, absorbed in contemplation, and, as it were, inebriated with the blood of life, of which she had just freely partaken for the last time on earth. Then suddenly her lips were opened to give utterance to a torrent of fervent and sublime words. "She who had always been so reserved in her speech now became eloquent; and although she had never before discoursed so freely, her language was so full of wisdom and meaning that there was not a word to be lost. It was remarked that all she had learned from sermons and good books, or gathered during her ecstasies, came back now to her memory, that she might share it all with her daughters before her death."[2] A fountain, hitherto unknown, of wisdom and eloquence had suddenly sprung up in this soul at the moment when she was about to wing her flight towards heaven. As she recalled to mind the Holy Scriptures, she selected the passage the best adapted, perhaps, to charm the memory of a loving soul like hers. She began to recite at length the history of the resurrection of Lazarus, and spoke with

[1] See note on page 261. [2] Fr. Apolinaris, p. 477. Theod.

tender emotion of the visit that Jesus made to the blessed sisters Martha and Mary when He deigned to share their grief, to go with them to the tomb of their brother and to show them His tender and sincere compassion by mingling His divine tears with theirs. And as her thoughts were arrested here, she proceeded to discourse profoundly, and to the great admiration of those who were present, upon these tears of our Lord, as well as those which He shed at the sight of Jerusalem, and whilst He hung upon the Cross. Her words were so real, so intense and earnest, so fitted to move every heart, that tears streamed from the eyes of all who heard her. The dying woman perceived this, and as if gently to recall them, she repeated the words of our Lord on His way to death: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves." Her heart, always so full of compassion and sympathy, though raised to heaven, yet remained open to those whom she had loved; she still sought to soothe the sorrow of her companions, addressed to them words of affection and consolation, calling them constantly, "My friends, my dearly beloved!" When she had finished speaking she bowed her head and remained perfectly silent for a long time.

Then, without any apparent movement of her lips, there came again from her throat subdued sounds of an exquisitely sweet melody. When she was questioned regarding this, she replied, "Did you not hear them, those who sang with me? I sang as well as I could with them."

"No faithful soul will doubt," says her historian, "that she was already mingling her sweet voice with the songs of triumph, and the delicious harmony of the celestial hosts, which were awaiting the moment of her entry into their ranks; she was singing with the angels the glory of her Lord."[1] From the close of the day until early the following morning she remained in a state of exuberant joy,

[1] Theod.

of pious exaltation united with the most fervent devotion. In the moment of victory she celebrated with good right the combats now forever terminated. Sure of her glorious crown, she said to her friends, a little before midnight, "What should we do if our enemy the devil should appear?" A moment later she cried out in a loud and clear voice, "Begone, begone wicked one! I have renounced thee." Soon afterwards she said, "There, he has gone; let us speak now of God and His Son; don't let it weary you, it will not be long." About midnight her face became so resplendent that those present could hardly look at her. At the first cock-crow she said, "This is the hour in which the Virgin Mary brought our Lord into the world and presented Him to those around her. Let us speak of God and of the Infant Jesus; for this is midnight, the hour that Jesus was born, and was laid in the manger, and created a new star that none had ever seen before; this is the hour that He came to redeem the world, and He will redeem me also; this is the hour in which He rose from the dead, and in which He delivered the souls of those who were held; He will deliver mine also from this miserable world." Her joy and happiness increased each moment. "I am weak," she said, "but have no pain, no more than if I were not sick. . . . I recommend you all to God." She said much more, all inflamed as she was by the Holy Ghost; but her words, which breathed the most tender love of God, have not reached us. Finally she said, "O Mary! come to my help. . . . The moment has arrived when God calls His friends to His nuptials. . . . The Bridegroom in quest of His bride." Then in a low voice, "Silence! . . . Silence!" In pronouncing this word she bowed her head as if in a sweet sleep, and yielded up her soul in triumph.[1] Her soul took

[1] Submissa voce omnibus qui circa ipsam erant silentium indixit, et ita quasi suavissime obdormiens exspiravit. — Martene, p. 1255. Tandem jubilando requievit . . . inclinato capite expiravit. — Theod.

its flight to heaven in the midst of the angels and saints who had come to meet her. A delicious perfume at once spread itself through the humble cottage which now contained only her mortal remains, and in the air was heard a choir of celestial voices who sang with ineffable harmony the sublime response of the Church, which was an epitome of her whole life: *Regnum mundi contempsi, propter amorem Domini mei Jesu-Christi quem vidi, quem amavi, in quem credidi, quem dilexi.*

This was the night of November 19, 1231. The Saint had barely completed her twenty-fourth year.[1]

[1] The manuscript of the Prince of Solms, entitled *Antiquitates monasterii Aldenbergensis*, relates that little Gertrude, four years of age, who was then at Aldenberg, said this same day to her companions: "I hear the bell for the dead ringing at Marburg; at this very moment the dear lady my mother is dead!" Justi, *Vorzeit*, 1823, p. 806.

CHAPTER XXX

Dear St. Elizabeth is buried in the Chapel of her Hospital; the Little Birds of Heaven celebrate her Obsequies

Ecce quod concupivi, jam video; quod speravi, jam teneo; ipsi sum juncta in coelis, quem in terris posita, tota devotione dilexi.

Anthem of Saint Agnes, *in the Roman Breviary.*

In contradistinction to all human glories, those of the elect of God begin, on earth as in heaven, only after death. It would seem as if our Lord, in His paternal solicitude, had desired always to place them under the protection of the oblivion or the reproaches of this world. No sooner had the soul of Elizabeth gone to seek the sweet repose of heaven than her body became the object of a veneration which had been too often denied her during life; and we shall see this poor widow, so long persecuted, despised, and calumniated, henceforth occupying the thoughts of the faithful, and stirring all Catholic hearts, from the Supreme Head of the Church to the humblest pilgrims of devout Germany.

After she had breathed her last, her faithful attendants and some other devout women washed her body, and prepared it for burial, with great respect for all that remained of her whose last moments had been in such perfect accord with all the glorious victories of her previous life. As her shroud they gave her the poor torn habit which had been her only dress, and which she herself had intended and desired to be used as her funeral vestment. This sacred body was then carried by Fran-

ciscan religious, accompanied by the clergy and people, amidst the funeral chants and the tears of all, to the humble chapel of the hospital of St. Francis, which was destined to be the first theatre of her glory, after being that of her heroic struggles for the love of God and His poor. It was in this same chapel that she was accustomed to pray, and to attend to all her exercises of devotion.

The report of her death having soon spread abroad, all the priests and religious of the surrounding country, especially the monks of the order of Citeaux, and an immense crowd of the faithful, hastened to pay the last respects to her who had just gathered, at so young an age, the fruits of her labors. Animated by that popular instinct which is so often the certain presage of real fame, and offering that honor which the Church herself was soon to bestow upon these precious remains, the most ardent among the people sought at once to secure relics of the future Saint. The grief caused by her loss was universal; all eyes were filled with tears, and on all sides were heard the sobs and lamentations of the poor, and the sick, who could no longer be the objects of her tender care, and who were now gathered together in great numbers to look for the last time upon the features of their benefactress. They wept, all of them, as though each one had lost a mother. But how shall we describe the anguish and desolation of those who had lost in her their support and their example. Among others, the Franciscan religious, to whom she was not only a sister, by their community of habit and rule, but also a mother, by the constant and efficacious protection which she had given them, deplored her loss with the keenest sorrow. "When I think," says one of them, who has left us a biography of their celestial friend, "when I think of our loss, I am more inclined to weep than to write."

The love and devotion of the people demanded and

obtained that these precious remains should be exposed in the church during four entire days, surrounded by a multitude of the faithful, who sang pious canticles. The face of the dead Saint was uncovered, and offered to those who eagerly gazed upon it a most sweet and fascinating spectacle. Her youthful beauty had reappeared in all its freshness and attractiveness; the glow of life and youth was seen again upon her cheeks. Her flesh, instead of being rigid in death, was flexible to the touch, as if she were still living. "Before her death," says one of her historians, "her appearance was that of most persons who have spent a life of affliction and pain. But no sooner had she expired than her face became so smooth, so life-like, so majestic and beautiful, that one could not see the sudden change without being struck with admiration; and one would have said that death, which destroys all in others, had come to her only to repair, not the ruins of old age or of time, but those of suffering and austerity; as if grace, which till then had animated her soul, wished now in turn to animate her body. It seemed as if, in the shadow and darkness of death, one might discern some of the beauties of immortality, or that eternal glory had shed in advance some of its rays over a mortal body that was destined some day to be clothed in light and splendor." [1]

This charming tradition, which tells that physical beauty was restored and enhanced in Elizabeth's body as soon as her soul had taken its flight, has been faithfully followed by the unknown artist, who sculptured the principal traits of her life on the altars of Marburg, and who, in representing her exposed upon her bier, has given us a very different conception of her beauty, in this sleep of death, from that in any of the other subjects.

It was not alone the eye that was attracted, in this

[1] Fr. Archangel, p. 478.

moment of sorrow, by the delicate and sacred body of the young deceased; a fresh and delicious perfume was exhaled, as a sweet symbol of the grace and divine virtues of which it had been the depository. Pious souls might then recall the words of Holy Scripture, that the memory of the just is like a sweet perfume.[1] "This wonderful fragrance," says the writer whom we have just cited, "was a source of great consolation to the poor and to all the people in the loss which they had sustained. This celestial odor soothed their sorrow and arrested the flow of their tears and their mourning, by the assurance given them in this miraculous sign that, although the Saint was dead, she would still be, even more than while living, the charitable mother of the poor, the sure refuge of the afflicted; and that the sacred perfume of her prayers, ascending unceasingly to the throne of the Divine Majesty, would thence be diffused, in strength and virtue, upon all who at any time should invoke her in their needs."[2]

The fourth day after her death her obsequies were celebrated with the greatest solemnity. This pure and precious balm was enclosed in a narrow coffin. This rich and resplendent jewel was hidden beneath a humble stone, in the chapel of the hospital, in the presence of the abbots and religious of many neighboring monasteries, and of an immense multitude of people, whom the prudent efforts of the clergy could alone restrain and regulate. The grief of these Christian people was intense and vociferous, and was certainly the greatest homage that the deceased Saint received on that occasion. But with their tears and mourning there was mingled also an expression of sentiments more generous and worthy of her; for all raised their voices to heaven in fervent devotion and grateful recognition to God that He had given them so glorious an example and so admirable a teacher.

[1] Ecclus. xlix, 1. [2] Fr. Archangel, pp. 479–480.

But the Divine Master had reserved for His faithful servant another sweet and touching homage. The preceding night, while prayers for the dead were being sung, the Abbess of Wechere,[1] who had come to take part in the funeral ceremonies, heard melodious sounds outside, which greatly aroused her attention. She went out, accompanied by several others, to satisfy herself as to what they were, and saw on the roof of the church, although it was winter, a countless number of birds of a species unknown to any one, who sang such sweet and diversified harmonies that all present were filled with admiration. They seemed to want to celebrate these glorious funeral obsequies in their own way. Some said they were the angels sent by God to accompany the soul of Elizabeth to heaven, who had returned to honor her body by their songs of heavenly joy. "These little birds," says St. Bonaventure, "bore testimony to her purity, in thus speaking to her their own language at the time of her burial, and in singing so sweetly over her tomb. He who spoke by the mouth of an ass to repress the folly of a prophet might well speak through that of the birds to proclaim the innocence of a Saint."

[1] This is probably Wetter, the abbey of the diocese of Mentz.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Wonderful Miracles that God wrought through the Intercession of Dear St. Elizabeth; her Brother-in-Law, Duke Conrad, endeavors to secure her Canonization

In vita sua fecit monstra, et in morte mirabilia operatus est.
Ecclus. XLVIII, 15.

Our Lord was not slow in manifesting the miraculous power that He wished henceforth to be attributed to her whose mortal life had been one long act of humility. Upon that invincible love which had chosen abjection and misery in preference to all that earth could offer, He hastened to confer the right to dispose of the riches of heaven.

On the second day after her funeral, a certain monk of the order of Citeaux came and knelt at her tomb to ask her help. For more than forty years the unfortunate man had languished, the victim of an internal sorrow, tormented by a secret wound of the heart, which no human remedy had been able to relieve. After having invoked with perfect faith the zealous consoler of every suffering, he felt himself suddenly cured and wholly relieved of the heavy burden he had borne, and gave his testimony under oath to that effect before Master Conrad and the Curate of Marburg. This was the first cure obtained through her intercession; and we remark with affectionate interest the fact that this soul, so tender and loving, who during her life had suffered so much from the emotions of

her heart, chose as the first object of her merciful intervention in heaven one of those cruel interior sorrows that no human medicine can either heal or commiserate.

Shortly afterwards there appeared at her tomb a prelate of illustrious birth and of high ecclesiastical rank; history has not given us his name, but accuses him of all the excesses of debauchery which were the more abominable because of the sacred character with which he was clothed. Oftentimes, overcome by remorse and shame, he had recourse to the tribunal of penance, but without fruit; at the first temptation he fell again, and his repeated falls only became the more scandalous and deplorable. Nevertheless, he continued to struggle against his weakness, and defiled as he was, he came, in the hope of obtaining strength, to the tomb of the pure and simple Elizabeth. There, with copious tears, he offered his prayers, and besought her protection and intercession, remaining long hours absorbed in sincere fervor and deep contrition. He did not cease his ardent supplications until he was convinced that they had reached the divine ear, and that our Lord had heard the prayer that the beloved Elizabeth offered to Him in the name of a poor victim of sin. He felt himself, in fact, possessed of a spiritual strength superior to all the impulses of vice; and from that moment, as he declared in his confession to Master Conrad, the evil inclinations of the flesh were so subdued that he no longer had anything but slight temptations to combat, which he easily overcame.

Many other suffering souls, burdened with the yoke of sin, learned to cast it off as they knelt near the remains of this young woman who, while living, had so nobly conquered it. Among those who came thus to invoke her assistance in overcoming their own weaknesses, and whose prayers were heard, there are especially mentioned men dominated by pride, avarice, hatred, and anger; and cer-

tainly, to escape from their bondage, they could not follow a more faithful guide than she who had humiliated herself beneath all others, who had given her very being and all she possessed to God's poor, and who had spent her whole life in loving and pardoning.

But it was not alone the misfortunes of the soul that aroused her active compassion; the sufferings and physical infirmities, to the alleviation of which she had devoted so much solicitude and courage during her life, although they had lost the loving and zealous care which she had given them, gained, on the other hand, in the new and greater power which God had bestowed upon her, and henceforth possessed in her a heavenly physician. A beautiful anecdote is told which illustrates how quickly she was called upon to exercise this beneficent power, and how her glorified soul remained faithful to that sweet familiarity towards the humble and poor, which had thrown such a charm over her relations with them on earth. At the monastery of Reinhartsbrunn, where the Duke Louis was buried near his ancestors, there was a lay brother who performed the duties of a miller. He was a man of great piety, and practised severe austerities; for instance, he wore an iron breastplate next his person, the better to subdue the flesh. The Duchess, in the frequent visits which she made to this abbey to pray for her dearly loved husband, had noticed this poor brother, and entertained a special affection for him, because of the sanctity of his life. One day in particular, having met him as she was approaching the venerated tomb, she spoke with great kindness, and exacted from him a promise that there should be a spiritual communion and fraternity between them, as a pledge of which she extended her hand and took his, in spite of the resistance of the humble religious, who in his simplicity blushed at touching the hand of so illustrious a lady. Some time afterwards, as

he was occupied in repairing the implements of his occupation, one of the vanes of the windmill accidentally struck him and shattered his arm. He suffered cruelly from this accident, but waited patiently till it should please God to relieve him. On the night of November 19, while his saintly and noble sister was yielding up her predestined soul to God, the brother miller was watching and praying in the church of his abbey, groaning with the pain which his arm caused him. Suddenly the Duchess Elizabeth appeared to him, clothed in royal garments and resplendent with an ineffable light. She spoke in her usual sweet voice, and said to him, "How are you getting along, my good brother Volkmar, and how is your health?"[1] Although startled at first, and dazzled by the divine light which surrounded her, he recognized her and replied, "Why, madam, how is it that you who have usually worn such poor clothes are to-day wearing such beautiful and shining garments?" "Ah!" she said, "that is because I have changed my condition." And then she took his right hand again, the same that he had given her before as a sign of fraternity, and which the windmill had broken, and healed it. This touching of the wounded member seemed painful to him; he awoke as if from a dream, and found his hand and arm perfectly sound and well. He at once returned thanks to God, and to the sister who had thought of him the moment she entered into heaven.

But the most remarkable miracles occurred near her tomb, during the first days after her funeral. Persons afflicted with the most painful infirmities, the deaf, the cripple, the blind, the weak-minded, lepers, and paralytics, who, perhaps believing her still living, had come to implore her generosity, went away entirely cured, after having prayed in the chapel where she rested.

[1] Qualiter, inquit, agis, et quomodo vales, frater mi Volkmare?

Contemporaneous accounts have preserved for us authentic details of these cures. We shall cite one only, which was given under oath to the pontifical judges; it will give us an idea of the others. There was a man named Henry, living at Marburg, forty years of age, whose sight for some time had been so poor that he frequently lost his way and wandered from the road into the fields of grain, which drew upon him the ridicule of his comrades. Finally he became totally blind, and was obliged to be led wherever he wanted to go. He then asked to be brought to the tomb of her who was already called the *Blessed Elizabeth*, and offering two wax candles, made a vow to her. The judges asked him what words he had made use of in invoking her. He repeated them as follows: "Dear lady Saint Elizabeth, heal my eyes, and I will always be your faithful servant, and will every year of my life pay two deniers to your hospital." And immediately his sight was restored, so that he saw better than he ever had. This was the fifteenth day after the death of the Saint.

The more the report of these wonders was spread the greater became the crowd of people suffering from all sorts of afflictions, who came to obtain the cure of their various ills. The divine mercy was not indifferent to the faith of these Christian people, and each day the favors accorded to the prayers of those who chose Elizabeth as their advocate became more frequent and manifest. They came, sick and suffering souls, not only from the neighboring dioceses of Mentz and Treves, but from the more distant provinces of Cologne, Bremen, and Magdeburg. Those who went away consoled or healed were immediately replaced by the newly arrived; and these in turn departed, proclaiming to those whom they met on the way the wonderful mercies of God. "I was there myself about this time," says the Monk Cæsarius, "and I have never in my life seen so many people at once as there were at Marburg and in the

vicinity. It was difficult to make one's way in or out of the church."

Master Conrad, observing the wonderful fruits of a life for which he felt himself in some sort responsible, and of which he might justly claim some of the glory, lost no time in making known to Pope Gregory IX the miracles by which the divine power had signalized the tomb of the glorious deceased, and the ever-increasing veneration of the people, proposing that he should establish and solemnly declare her title to the invocation of the faithful. The illustrious Pontiff, who despite his ninety years had a heart young in love and solicitude for the honor of God and His Church, who had already had the honor of canonizing St. Francis of Assisi, and who this same year had inscribed by his side in heaven his most illustrious disciple, St. Anthony of Padua, replied to Conrad's proposition with affectionate earnestness, but at the same time with apostolic prudence. "We have learned from your letter, dear son Conrad," he writes, "with tears of sweet joy, how the Divine Master, whose power is infinite, has blessed His servant Elizabeth, of illustrious memory, during her lifetime our dearest daughter in Jesus Christ and Duchess of Thuringia; how, weak and frail as she was by nature, He made her, by the gift of His grace, strong and constant in the worship of His divine name; and how, after admitting her to the assembly of the Saints, He makes manifest by glorious signs the beatitude which He has bestowed upon her." At the same time, the Pontiff, remembering that *all is not gold that glitters*, and wishing to remove the doubts of distrustful minds, directed the Archbishop of Mentz, the Abbot of Erbach, and Master Conrad to take testimony, publicly and in due form, concerning everything which in the life of the Duchess might have been pleasing to God and to men, as well as the miracles which had followed her death; and after having reduced the various

depositions to writing, and attested the same with their seals, to forward them to Rome by faithful messengers. At the same time he prescribed the order and method to be observed in the examination of witnesses, with a care and attention to detail which showed all the solicitude and prudent caution with which he entered upon this delicate inquiry.

In the meantime Siegfried, Archbishop of Mentz, whose diocese included the city of Marburg, and therefore the tomb of Elizabeth, had been equally impressed by the wonders that the divine goodness had shown forth in the midst of his flock. At the request of Master Conrad, and after a revelation which was made to him in a vision, he went to Marburg, and there consecrated on the feast of St. Lawrence (August 10, 1232) two altars which the faithful had built in honor of Elizabeth in the church in which she was buried. A great crowd had assembled there to assist at the ceremony and to hear the sermon that Master Conrad was to preach in honor of his illustrious penitent. While preaching it occurred to him that he would never have a more favorable opportunity of satisfying the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff; and, without reflecting further, he at once directed all those among his hearers who had obtained any cure or heavenly favor through the intercession of the Duchess to present themselves with their proofs on the following day, at the hour of Prime, before the Archbishop of Mentz and the other prelates who had come to assist at the dedication of the altars. At the hour fixed, a large number of people appeared and made affirmation as to all the favors they had received through the intercession of Elizabeth. The archbishop, being compelled by important business to return, confined himself to writing out the most remarkable and the best attested facts. Neither he nor the other prelates could affix their seals, as they were there without them. Master Conrad copied

word for word all these various depositions, and gathered himself many others, always under oath, and having read them all over to the Archbishop of Mentz and the Abbot of Erbach, who found nothing therein to change, he sent them to the Pope, adding thereto a résumé of the life of Elizabeth from his own memory. This precious record has been preserved,[1] and forms the most ancient source upon which the historian of the Saint can draw.

This first account of miracles, transmitted by Master Conrad, contains a detailed statement of thirty-seven sudden and supernatural cures, arranged according to the direction of the Holy Father, with the most precise details as to places, dates, and persons, as well as the forms of the prayers that had been employed.

Most of these narratives, to me at least, are full of the most pathetic interest. We see in them the unfortunates who had recourse to her always addressing her in that tender and familiar language which her extreme sweetness and humility had permitted during her life. "Dear St. Elizabeth," one would say to her, "cure my leg and I will always be your faithful servant." Or, "Blessed Lady and Duchess Elizabeth, I recommend to you my poor daughter." "O Blessed Elizabeth!" cried a poor mother, as she was burying the body of her son who had just died, "why have I thus lost my son? Come to my help and bring him to life again." A moment later his pulse began to beat, he came to life, and after trying for a long time to speak, he said towards midnight, "Where am I, dearly beloved?" He did not yet recognize his mother.

Another poor woman, whose daughter had been afflicted for five years with cruel infirmities, suffering, among other things, from enormous tumors on her back and breast, had her brought to Elizabeth's tomb, and remained there with her for two days in prayer. At the end of that time,

[1] See Index of Historical Sources, post, p. 484.

seeing that her prayers were not heard, she murmured loudly against the Saint, saying, "Since you will not hear me, I will prevent any one from coming to your sepulchre." She left Marburg greatly irritated; but after having gone a mile and a half, the pain and the cries of her daughter obliged her to stop near a fountain in the village of Rosdorf. The child slept for a little while, and when she awoke, she said she had seen a beautiful lady whose face was resplendent, and her hands white and delicate, and that she had passed her hands over the most afflicted parts of her body, saying to her, "Rise up and walk." And immediately the young girl cried out, "O mother, see, I am perfectly well in every part of my body." They returned together to the tomb to render thanks to the Saint, and left there the basket in which the sick child had been carried.

A young man whose legs had been paralyzed, and who had, moreover, a painful disease of the spine, rode to the tomb of the Duchess, and was cured there of his spinal difficulty. As he was being taken home, he said, "St. Elizabeth, I shall not go again to visit you unless through your help I am able to go afoot; but I will gladly go if you will grant me this favor." Some days afterward, on the feast of All-Saints, he felt himself completely cured, and was able to fulfil his promise.

I shall stop here, almost with regret, in the transcription of these narratives, which are such precious witnesses of the faith and manners of that period. This collection of depositions was not concluded until in the early months of the year 1233, and their transmission to Rome was retarded for some unknown reason. In the meantime Conrad had perished, a victim to his zeal for the Faith. The boldness with which he accused and pursued the most powerful lords and princes, when he mistrusted their faith, had for a long time aroused intense hatred and ill-

will against him, which the excessive severity, and perhaps injustice, of some of his decrees tended constantly to increase. On July 30, 1233, as he was returning from Mentz to Marburg, he was surprised, near the village of Kappel, by several knights and vassals of Count Sayn, whom he had just accused of heresy. They attacked and killed him. The assassins wanted to spare his disciple and companion, Brother Gerard, a Franciscan; but he opposed them, and clung so closely to the body of his master, that it was impossible for them to kill one without the other. The bodies of Conrad and his friend, and those of twelve others, priests and laymen, victims of the heretics, were brought to Marburg amidst the grief of the people. He was buried in the same chapel with the saintly Duchess, his daughter in Jesus Christ, not far from her tomb.

The death of Conrad, who had been as watchful of the posthumous glory of Elizabeth as of her salvation while she was still living, was a great obstacle to the canonization which many of the faithful had wished and hoped for. The papers which he had gathered together were neglected or lost, and the zeal which had been manifested for this popular cause began to diminish.

The Lord, however, soon raised up a new and zealous defender of the glory of His humble servant, and in a quarter where such protection might have been least expected. Of the two brothers that the Duke Louis, Elizabeth's husband, had left, and whose disgraceful conduct towards their sister-in-law we have seen, one, Henry, governed the duchy during the minority of young Hermann, Louis' son; the other, Conrad, gave himself up, without restraint, to all the excesses which the passions of youth could suggest. In 1232, on account of a penance inflicted by the Archbishop of Mentz upon the Abbot of Reinhartsbrunn, the natural protégé of the house of Thuringia, the Landgrave Conrad was so irritated against the

prelate that he rushed upon him in a full assembly of the chapter at Erfurt, seized him by the hair, threw him down, and undoubtedly would have stabbed him if his servants had not interfered. But not satisfied by this outrage, he set about ravaging the possessions of the see of Mentz, and besieged, among other places, the city of Fritzlar. He took it by assault; and to revenge the coarse ridicule to which he had been subjected upon the part of the women of the city during the siege, he set it on fire, which consumed the whole city, with its churches and convents, and a large number of the inhabitants.

He then retired to his Tenneberg castle, near Gotha, where the hand of God was soon laid upon him. A courtesan one day appeared before him, who seemed to have fallen into the most abject misery. She had come to ask for help. The Landgrave having reproached her in the severest terms for the infamy of her life, the unfortunate woman replied that it was poverty alone that had forced her to it, and drew so sad a picture of her misfortunes that he was deeply moved, and promised to provide for her in future, upon condition that she should renounce her life of shame. This incident produced a profound impression upon his soul, and he spent the following night in great agitation of mind, reflecting how much more culpable he was than this unfortunate woman whom he had reproached; whom poverty alone had driven to sin, whilst he, rich and powerful, had so abused all the gifts of God. The following morning he communicated his thoughts to several of his companions in arms, participators in his deeds of violence, and learned with surprise that they had been agitated by the same reflections. They at once concluded that this interior voice, speaking thus simultaneously to them all, was an admonition from heaven, and resolved to do penance and amend their lives. They began by making a pilgrimage, barefooted, to Gladenbach, not

far distant, and from there they went to Rome, to obtain from the Pope himself absolution of their sins. Arrived at Rome (1233) the Duke gave an example of the most sincere penance and of fervent piety. He received twenty-four poor persons at his table every day, serving them himself. The Holy Father gave him absolution, imposing as a condition that he should become reconciled with the Archbishop of Mentz, and all those whom he had wronged, construct and endow a monastery in place of those he had burned, publicly acknowledge his offence upon the ruins of Fritzlar, and finally enter himself a religious order. Whilst he was thus drawing nearer to God, the memory of his humble and saintly sister-in-law, Elizabeth, whom he had ignored and persecuted, came vividly to his mind. He resolved to make amends for the wrongs he had done her by striving to promote her glory, and in the interviews which he had with the Sovereign Pontiff he spoke fully of her great sanctity and earnestly besought her canonization.

Upon his return to Germany (1234) he hastened to fulfil all the conditions of his absolution. He went to Fritzlar, where those who had escaped in the massacre of the inhabitants had returned to find a refuge near the ruins of the principal monastery. He prostrated himself upon his face before them and begged them for the love of God to forgive him all the wrongs he had done them. He then marched barefooted through the streets, with a cord in his hand, and kneeling at the door of the church, offered it to the crowd who were present, and invited any who wished to take it and scourge him. One old woman only accepted the invitation, and plied his back with many blows, which he bore patiently. He had the church and monastery rebuilt at once, and established a community there, and at the same time conceded many important privileges to the city of Fritzlar. From there he went to Eisenach, where, in concert with his brother Henry, he

founded a convent of Brothers Preachers, under the invocation of St. John, but for the special intention of his sister-in-law Elizabeth, thus to purify himself from the stain of having been an accomplice in the cruel wrongs she had suffered in this same city of Eisenach at the time of her expulsion from Wartburg.

From that moment he devoted himself to the interests of her glory with the same zeal that Conrad had. We may well believe, indeed, that it was her prayers, united with those of his brother, that had obtained for him the grace to see his own faults, and to despise, as was then said, *the world in its bloom.*

Having decided to enter the Teutonic Order, he took the habit and the cross in the church of the hospital of St. Francis, founded by Elizabeth at Marburg. He induced his brother to confirm the donation that Elizabeth had made of this hospital and its dependencies to these knighted monks, and added thereto all his own possessions in Hesse and Thuringia. He further obtained the Pope's sanction of this donation, and exemption from all episcopal jurisdiction, with the gift of many other rights and prerogatives for this hospital, which had already become one of the principal houses of the Teutonic Order; all in honor of the Duchess Elizabeth, whose body rested there; in order, as was said in his petition to the Holy Father, that this sacred body, already honored by the veneration of the faithful, might enjoy the privilege of liberty.

In the meantime he urged, above all things, upon the Supreme Pontiff the solemn recognition of the sanctity of his sister-in-law, and the numerous graces that God was granting daily through her intercession. The Pope finally yielded to his entreaties, and wishing, says a contemporaneous writer, that the pious simplicity of the Church Militant should not be deceived, in case the facts advanced should not be proved, but, on the other hand, that the

Church Triumphant should not be deprived of its glory, if the reports should be verified, by a brief dated the 5th of the ides of October, in the year 1234, he charged the Bishop of Hildesheim and the abbots Hermann of Georgenthal and Raymond of Herford to institute another examination into the miracles attributed to Elizabeth. In this brief he directed the three commissioners to send him the results of the examination that he had previously charged the Archbishop of Mentz and Master Conrad to make; and in case they could not find these papers, to take in writing the testimony of the same witnesses, and of any others, and to send them to him within five months from the date of their receipt of his letter. The bishop and his colleagues, obedient to the orders of the Sovereign Pontiff, caused the brief to be published in all the neighboring dioceses, appointing a day when the faithful who had knowledge of any cure obtained by the prayers of the Duchess should appear at Marburg, to make a deposition thereof, with the attestation of their prelates and pastors. On the appointed day, the apostolic commissioners appeared themselves at Marburg, where they found several thousand persons assembled from all parts of Europe. They associated with themselves several abbots from Citeaux and Prémontré, a great number of priors and friars minor and preachers, regular canons, religious of the Teutonic Order, and other learned and prudent men. The witnesses came to give their testimony, after being sworn, before this imposing tribunal. Their statements were carefully weighed and examined by civilians and professors of the law.

The names of the witnesses who appeared this time are not found, with the exception of the four companions of the Duchess: Guta, who had been attached to her from the time that she was five years of age; Ysentrude, her confidant and best friend; Elizabeth and Irmengarde, who

had served her during her life at Marburg. It was then that these four all related what they had known of the life of their mistress. Their accounts, invaluable documents, have been preserved in their entirety,[1] and have furnished us with most of the interesting and beautiful features of her life which are presented in this narrative. The depositions of most of the other witnesses related to the miracles obtained through her intercession; among the great number reported we should note the restoration to life of several dead persons.[2] One hundred and twenty-nine depositions were judged worthy to be received, transcribed, and attested by the seals of the Bishop of Hildesheim and other prelates and abbots to be sent to Rome. The Abbot Bernard de Buch, Salomon Magnus, brother preacher, and Brother Conrad, of the Teutonic Order, the former Landgrave and brother-in-law of the deceased, were designated to deliver to the Pope the result of the examination that he had ordered, as well as that which Master Conrad had made three years before. They were at the same time made the bearers of letters from a great number of bishops, abbots, princes and princesses, and noble lords, who humbly besought the common Father of the faithful to confirm the veneration on earth of her who had already received the congratulations of angels, and to no longer suffer this bright flame of celestial charity, lighted by the hand of God to serve as an example to the world, to be obscured by the clouds of contempt, or hidden under the bushel of heresy.

[1] See the Index of Historical Sources, below, p. 484.

[2] Historians differ as to the number of these miraculous resurrections. Theodoric and the prologue of the four companions fix it at sixteen. Pope Benedict XIV especially cites this extraordinary favor accorded to Elizabeth. *De Serv. Dei beatif.*, lib. IV, pars 1, c. XXI, No. 5.

CHAPTER XXXII

Canonization of Dear St. Elizabeth by Pope Gregory; the Great Joy and Veneration of the Faithful of Germany at the Exaltation of her Sacred Relics at Marburg

Annunciaverunt coeli justitiam ejus, et viderunt omnes populi gloriam ejus. — Ps. XCVI, 6.

Mihi autem nimis honorificati sunt amici tui, Deus.
Ps. CXXXVIII, 17.

In the spring of the year 1235, the Holy Father was at Perugia, the same city in which, seven years before, he had canonized St. Francis of Assisi, when the penitent Conrad again appeared before him, with the other envoys, to entreat him to inscribe in heaven, by the side of the Seraphic Father, the name of the young and humble woman who had been the first of his daughters in Germany, and the most zealous of his disciples. The news of their arrival made a great impression upon both clergy and people. The Pontiff opened their letters in the presence of the cardinals and principal prelates of the Roman Court and a great number of priests, who had assembled to hear them. He communicated to them all the details transmitted concerning the life of Elizabeth, and the miracles that were attributed to her. They were filled with admiration, we are told, and moved to tears at hearing of such humility, such love of the poor and of poverty, such wondrous things wrought through divine grace. The Pope, however, resolved to exercise the great-

est scrutiny in the examination of these miracles. He proceeded with all that thoroughness which characterized him, scrupulously observing all the formalities requisite to dispel every vestige of doubt. The care and exactness observed in this discussion were so remarkable that it merited to be cited, five centuries later, by one of the most illustrious successors of Gregory IX, Benedict XIV. But all these precautions only served to render the truth more signal and incontestable. The more scrutinous the examination, both as to facts and persons, the more complete became the certainty; and to quote the language of contemporaneous writers, the plough of apostolic authority, in furrowing this unexplored field, brought to light a priceless treasure of sanctity. It was clearly seen that the net of the Lord had rescued this dear Elizabeth from the midst of the waves and the tempests of terrestrial tribulation, and had brought her safely to the haven of eternal rest.

At a consistory, over which the Sovereign Pontiff presided, and at which the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, and a great number of cardinals were present, the officially attested documents concerning the life and the sanctity of Elizabeth were read, and all with common accord declared that there need be no further delay in inscribing in the catologue of Saints upon earth that glorious name, which had already been inscribed in the book of life, as had been made manifest in so wonderful a manner by the Lord.

The same documents were then read before the people. They were deeply moved thereby, and in transports of admiration, cried out with one voice: "Canonization, Holy Father, canonization, and without delay." The Pope found no difficulty in yielding to this pressing unanimity; and to give more éclat to the ceremony, he decided that it should take place on the Feast of Pentecost (May 26, 1235).

The Duke Conrad, whose zeal was only redoubled by the success of his efforts, took charge of all the necessary preparations for this imposing solemnity.

The great festival having arrived, the Pope, accompanied by patriarchs, cardinals, and prelates, and followed by several thousand of the faithful, went in procession to the Dominican Convent at Perugia. The solemn march was accompanied by the music of trumpets and other instruments, and all who took part in it, from the Pope to the least of the people, carried wax candles, which the Landgrave had distributed at his own expense. The procession having arrived at the church, and the preparatory ceremonies concluded, the cardinal deacon, assistant of the Pope, read to the faithful, in a loud voice, an account of the life and the miracles of Elizabeth, amidst the acclamations of the people, and the tears of holy joy and pious enthusiasm which streamed from the eyes of all these fervent Christians, happy and delighted at having another loving and powerful friend in heaven. Then[1] the Pope exhorted all present to pray, as he was about to pray himself, that God would not allow him to be deceived in this matter. After all had knelt and prayed for this intention, the Pope intoned the *Veni Creator*, which was sung, throughout, by the assembly. At the conclusion of the hymn, the cardinal deacon at the right of the Pope said,

[1] In this description of the ceremonies of canonization, I have followed, first, the extract from Cardinal d'Ostie, *de Relig. et vener. SS.*, inserted in the Treatise of Benedict XIV, *de serv. Dei beat.*, L. I, C. 36, § 5 et 9; then the fragment entitled *ex ordine Romano saeculi* XIV, inserted by Mabillon in his *Museum Italicum*, Vol. II, pp. 422 et seq. These are the most ancient records, we believe, as to the form employed in the canonization of the Saints. Angelo Rocca, Bishop of Tagaste and Prefect of the Apostolic Sacristy, says in his commentary, *de Canonizatione Sanctorum*, Romae, 1610, No. 66, that Pope Gregory IX, who canonized St. Elizabeth, was the first to fix the rules of canonization.

Flectamus genua, and immediately the Pope and all the people knelt and prayed in a low voice for some time. The cardinal deacon at the left then said, *Levate*, and the Pope being seated on his throne, with mitre on his head, declared dear Elizabeth a Saint, in these words: "For the honor of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and for the exaltation of the Catholic Faith and the propagation of the Christian religion, by the authority of the same God Almighty, by that of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own, and with the advice of our brothers, we declare and define that Elizabeth of happy memory, during her life Duchess of Thuringia, is a Saint, and entitled to be inscribed in the catalogue of the Saints. We there inscribe her, and at the same time we ordain that the Universal Church celebrate her feast and office with solemnity and devotion every year, on the anniversary of her death, the thirteenth of the calends of December. Further, by the same authority, we grant to all the faithful who, being truly penitent and having confessed their sins, shall visit her tomb on that day, an indulgence of one year and forty days."

The sounds of the organ and of all the bells mingled with the last words of the Pontiff. Presently, having removed his mitre, he intoned the canticle of joy, *Te Deum laudamus*, which was sung by all present with a harmony and enthusiasm which seemed to resound through the heavens. A cardinal deacon then said in a loud voice, "*Pray for us, St. Elizabeth, alleluia*," and the Pope recited the collect or prayer in honor of the new Saint, which he had composed himself. Finally the cardinal deacon said the *Confiteor*, inserting the name of Elizabeth immediately after those of the Apostles, and the Pope gave the absolution and the usual blessing, likewise mentioning her name in the place where reference is made to the merits and prayers of the Saints.

Solemn High Mass was then celebrated. At the offertory, three of the cardinal judges successfully made mystical offerings of wax candles, bread, and wine; with two turtle doves, as symbols of the solitary and contemplative life; two pigeons, symbolic of the active life, but pure and faithful; and lastly, a cage of little birds, which, being set at liberty, flew towards heaven, figurative of the flight of holy souls to God.[1]

In the convent of the Dominicans at Perugia, where this ceremony took place, an altar was immediately erected in honor of the new Saint, which the Sovereign Pontiff privileged with an indulgence of thirty days to all who should come there to pray. So this was the first place in the world in which the devotion to dear St. Elizabeth was publicly observed; and ever since, the religious of this convent have always honored her feast day with grand solemnities, singing her office with the same music as they do that of their Father St. Dominic.

To signalize still more this happy day, the good Duke Conrad invited three hundred religious to his table, and sent bread, wine, fish, and butter to many of the neighboring convents, to the hermits and recluse, and especially to the poor Clares, to whom it seemed that the new Saint ought to serve as their special patron in heaven, after having been their rival on earth. Moreover, he distributed to several thousand poor persons, to all, without distinction, who asked assistance, generous supplies of meat, bread, wine, and money, not in his own name, but in the name of the Teutonic Order, and especially in

[1] Rocca, *de Canonizatione*, pp. 116, 124, 225. He cites St. Ildephonse and several other authors for an explanation of these symbols. I do not, indeed, assert that this custom had already been adopted at the time of the canonization of St. Elizabeth; but wishing to give a complete picture of the ceremonies used by the Church on this occasion, I have felt justified in introducing it here, with this observation.

honor of her who had always shown such unstinted generosity to the poor. It was certainly the best homage that could have been paid to her, that which would have been most agreeable to her loving solicitude. We can imagine with sweet emotion the joyful gratitude of these poor people, who received their first knowledge of the royal Saint from a remote country in so beneficent a way. This generosity of Conrad so pleased the Pope, that he invited him to his table, which was a great distinction, and placed him by his side, while he directed all of his retinue to be handsomely entertained. When he came to bid farewell, before returning to Germany, the Holy Father granted all the favors he asked in behalf of many whose petitions had been for a long time in suspense; and then he gave him his blessing and embraced him with many tears.

On the 1st of June, of the same year, 1235, the Pope published his bull of canonization, which was immediately sent to all the princes and bishops of Europe. It is as follows:

"GREGORY, BISHOP, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD

"*To all the archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, archdeacons, priests, deans, and other prelates of the Church, whom these letters may concern, greeting.*

"The Infinite Majesty of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Blessed Saviour and Redeemer of our souls, beholding from high heaven the nobility and excellence of our condition impaired and corrupted by the sin of our first parent, and then by an immense train of miseries, of vice and crime, touched with compassion for His own well-beloved creature, resolved to make known to him the depths of His all-powerful mercy, to deliver mankind, seated in the shadow of death, and to recall the poor exile

to his home of blessed liberty, judging in His divine and infinite wisdom that, as it properly belongs to the workman, who has commenced some masterpiece, to perfect it, and if unhappily it fall into decay and lose its beauty, to repair and restore it to its first form, so it fittingly belonged to Him, exclusive of all others, to redeem and restore His own creature who had fallen from his ancient dignity.

"For this purpose he entered within the narrow walls of the body of the Blessed Virgin (if indeed one may speak of that as narrow which could embrace Him who is infinite); from His celestial throne He entered and concealed Himself in the virginal palace of His Blessed Mother; invisible as He was, He made Himself visible, and by the adorable mystery of the Incarnation conquered and overthrew the prince of darkness; triumphed over his malice by the glorious redemption of human nature, and by His divine instructions marked out for faithful souls a certain path by which they might regain their pristine state.

"The blessed and gracious Elizabeth, of royal birth, and, by alliance, Duchess of Thuringia, carefully studying and wisely comprehending this admirable economy of our salvation, courageously undertook to follow the sacred footsteps of our Saviour, and to labor with all her strength in the practice of virtue; and in order to render herself worthy to be filled with eternal light, from the dawn of her life to its very close she never ceased to delight in the embraces of celestial love, and with a fervor wholly natural to her dedicated all the powers of her soul to the one supreme love of Jesus Christ Our Saviour, Who being True God and the True and Eternal Son of God, became the Son of Man, and Son of the Blessed Virgin, Queen of Angels and of men; a love most pure and fervent, which rendered her worthy to drink deeply of heavenly sweet-

ness, and to enjoy the divine favors which are bestowed at the nuptials of this Adorable Lamb.

"And then, being enlightened by this same light, and proving herself to be a true daughter of the Church, recognizing this Divine Jesus, the sole object of her affections, in the person of her neighbor, she loved him with a charity so admirable that her whole delight was to see herself surrounded by the poor, to live and converse with them. She cherished still more those whom misery and offensive diseases rendered most repulsive, and whose approach had horrified and driven away the strongest of hearts. So generously did she distribute her goods among them, that she made herself poor and needy, in order to supply them abundantly with all that was necessary for them. When she was yet but a child, and needed a governess because of her youth, she had already become the good mother, the guardian and protectress of the poor, and her heart was full of tenderness for their misfortunes.

"Having learned that the Eternal Judge would, at the last judgment, make special mention of the services that were rendered Him, and that the entrance into heaven was in a measure at the disposition of the poor, she conceived such an esteem for their condition, and undertook with such diligence to conciliate the affection and favor of those whom, ordinarily, persons of her condition despise and can with difficulty tolerate, that not content with distributing alms to them out of the abundance of her riches, emptying her graneries, her treasury, and her purse to help them, depriving herself, moreover, of delicacies that were prepared for her own table, she rigorously mortified her tender body by fasts and the torments of hunger to relieve them, constantly observed a strict economy in order to satisfy them, and practised an austerity that knew no intermission, that they might be comfortable; virtues that were all the more praiseworthy

and meritorious because with her they sprang from pure charity, and from the abundance of her own devotion, without her being constrained or obliged thereto by any one.

"What more can I say to you? This noble princess, renouncing all the rights that nature and her birth gave her, and sinking her desires in the one wish to serve and please God, during the life of her husband, with his permission, and preserving the rights which belonged to him, promised and observed a most faithful obedience to her confessor. But after the death of her honored husband, considering the saintly life which until then she had lived as too imperfect, she assumed the habit of religion, and during her remaining years lived the life of a most perfect religious, honoring by her state, and by her constant practices, the sacred and adorable mysteries of the bitter passion and death of our Saviour. O blessed woman! O admirable lady! O sweet Elizabeth! How truly appropriate indeed for you is that beautiful name, which signifies the fulness and abundance of God, since you so charitably supplied the wants of the famishing poor who are the images and representatives of God, nay, are the dearest members of His Divine Son. You have truly merited to be fed with the Bread of Angels, since you so mercifully gave your own to the terrestrial angels and messengers of the King of Heaven. O blessed and most noble widow! More fruitful in virtue than during your honorable married life you were in offspring, seeking in virtue that which nature seems to have denied to women, you became a sublime warrior against the enemies of our salvation; you conquered them with the shield of faith, as the Apostle says, the breastplate of justice, the sword of the spirit and of fervor, the helmet of salvation and the lance of perseverance.

"She rendered herself worthy of the love of her Immor-

tal Spouse, united as she was always with the Queen of Virgins by the earnest affection which she had for her service, and by a most perfect submission, following her example by sinking her exalted position in the practices of a most humble servant. Thus she imitated her good patron Elizabeth, whose name she bore, and the venerable Zachary, walking simply and without reproach in the way of the commandments of God, preserving by love the grace of God in her innermost soul, the outward fruits of which were her saintly acts and her unceasing good works. Cherishing and nourishing this grace by a constant increase in virtue, she merited at the close of her life to be received lovingly by Him in Whom alone we should place all our hope, Who reserves to Himself as a special right the power and office of exalting the innocent and the humble, and Who delivered her from the bonds of death to place her upon the exalted throne of inaccessible light. But whilst surrounded by the beauties and riches of the eternal kingdom, and exulting in the company of the saints and angels, her spirit enjoyed the vision of God, and was resplendent in the abyss of supreme glory, her charity led her, as it were, away from this throne, in order to enlighten us who live in the darkness of the world, and to console us by a great number of miracles, by virtue of which faithful Catholics have grown strong and are gloriously fortified in faith and hope and charity, infidels are enlightened and taught the true way of salvation, and hardened heretics stand abashed, covered with shame and confusion.

"For the enemies of the Church see plainly, without any possibility of contradiction, that by the merits of her who during the imprisonment of this life was a lover of the poor, full of sweetness and mercy, who shed many tears, not so much for her own sins as, through her great charity, for those of others, who hungered for justice, led

a most pure and innocent life, and who amidst the continual persecutions and reproaches that were heaped upon her preserved a stainless soul, and a calm and peaceful heart, they see that through the invocation of this faithful spouse of Jesus Christ, life is restored to the dead in a divine manner, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, and the power of walking to the lame. And thus the unhappy heretics, full of anger and hatred, in spite of their rage, and in spite of the poison with which they claimed to have infected all Germany, are compelled to witness in this same country the religion which they endeavored to destroy bursting forth gloriously and with unspeakable joy, to triumph over their malice and impiety.

"These miracles having been attested to us by proofs that admit of no contradiction, with the advice of our brothers, the venerable Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops, and all the other Prelates assembled in our Court, according to the duty of our office, which obliges us to watch diligently over whatsoever tends and contributes to the increase of the glory of our Lord, we have inscribed her name in the Catalogue of the Saints, enjoining strictly upon you the solemn celebration of her feast on the thirteenth day of the calends of the month of December, which is the day upon which, having broken the bonds of death, she took her flight to the source of supreme happiness, in order that through her pious intercession we may obtain that which she has already obtained from her Redeemer and is to enjoy for all eternity. Further, in order to exercise the power which is given us from on high to offer to all the faithful a foretaste of the delights of the invisible court, and in order to exalt the name of the Most High, by causing many to visit and honor the sepulchre of His spouse, full of confidence in the mercy of the Almighty, by the authority of the Blessed Apostles

Saint Peter and Saint Paul, we mercifully remit a year and forty days of penance to all, who, being contrite and having made a good confession, shall visit her tomb and offer there their prayers on her feast day, or on any day during the octave.

"Given at Perugia on the Calends of June, the ninth year of our pontificate."

This bull had hardly been published when the Holy Father felt, it would seem, the necessity of expressing his sentiments of love and admiration for the new Saint in a more pronounced and special manner. In looking for some one to whom he might turn to express the emotions which filled his heart, he thought of writing to a sovereign for whom he had a great affection, because of her piety and her devotion to the Holy See. This was Beatrice, daughter of Philip, King of the Romans, and wife of Ferdinand III, King of Castile and Leon, who was afterwards canonized. On the 7th of June he wrote her a long letter, in which he extolled the virtues of Elizabeth, applying to her many epithets from Holy Writ. "In these days," he said to her, "there has been presented us, according to the expression of Jesus, the son of Sirach, an admirable vessel, the work of the Most High, destined to serve as a furnace of charity by the fervor of her good works.[1] This vessel of election, consecrated to the Lord, is none other than St. Elizabeth, whose name may be interpreted as the *satiety of God*, because she so often satisfied God in the person of His poor and sick. She nourished the Lord with three loaves, which she borrowed from her Ancient Friend in the night of her tribulation,[2] the bread of truth, the bread of charity, and the bread of courage. . . . This Elizabeth, so in love with eternal happiness, served upon the table of the Master of heaven and earth three precious

[1] Ecclus. xliii, 3. [2] Luke xi, 5, 6.

dishes; repelling all which He forbids, obeying in whatsoever He commands, and performing all that He counsels. . . . Yes, it is indeed of her that it is written: *Admirable vessel, work of the Most High.* Vessel admirable by the virtue of her humility, by the abjection of her body, by the tenderness of her compassion, whom all ages, moreover, will admire! . . . O vessel of election, vessel of mercy! thou hast offered to tyrants and to the great of this world the wine of true compunction! Behold, already one of them, thy brother Conrad, formerly Landgrave, still young, and cherished by the world and by men; yet thou hast so intoxicated him with this sacred drink, that he tramples under foot all dignities, and casting aside everything, even to his tunic, has made his escape, thus stripped, from the hands of the wicked who crucify the Lord, to find refuge beneath the shelter of the Cross, with which he has sealed his heart! Behold, likewise thy sister, the virgin Agnes,[1] daughter of the King of Bohemia, whom thou hast also intoxicated with this same drink, and who at a tender age fled from the imperial splendors that were offered her, as venomous reptiles, and seizing the triumphant banner of the Cross, threw herself before her Spouse, accompanied by a choir of holy virgins. . . . Work of the Most High! a new work which the Lord has created upon the earth, since Elizabeth embraced the Lord Jesus Christ in her heart; since by her love she conceived Him, she placed Him in the world, she nourished Him. . . . Our enemy, the devil, has erected two great walls to conceal from our eyes the brightness of eternal light, ignorance of the mind, and concupiscence of the flesh. . . . But St. Elizabeth, sheltered in the sanctuary of her humility, overthrew this wall of ignorance and dispelled

[1] We spoke of this princess in the Introduction, pp. 32 and 64. She had refused the hand of the Emperor Frederick II to found a convent of Clares at Prague. See also Chapter XXXIII.

this darkness of pride so as to enjoy the inaccessible light; she rooted up the vine of concupiscence and placed a rein upon all her affections, so as to find true love. . . . And now she has been introduced by the Virgin Mother of God into the home of her celestial Spouse, she is blessed among all women, and crowned with a diadem of ineffable glory; and whilst she rejoices the Church Triumphant by her presence, she glorifies the Church Militant by the splendor of her miracles. . . . Dearest daughter in Jesus Christ, we wished to place before you the example of St. Elizabeth, as the most precious pearl, for two reasons: first, that you may often study yourself in this mirror to see that nothing is concealed in the recesses of your conscience that may be offensive in the eyes of the Divine Majesty; and then, that nothing may be wanting on your part that is essential to the garb of a celestial bride, and that when you are invited to appear before Assuérus, that is before the Eternal King, He will see you adorned with all virtues, and clothed in good works. Given at Perugia, the 7th of the ides of June, in the ninth year of our pontificate."

The bull of canonization soon reached Germany, and was received there with enthusiasm. It seems to have been first published at Erfurt, where the occasion was observed by a festival which lasted ten days, during which the most generous distributions were made among the poor.[1] The Archbishop Siegfried of Mentz at once fixed a day for the exaltation and translation of the body of the Saint, and deferred the date until the following spring, in order to give the bishops and the faithful of Germany

[1] Until the year 1783 the custom was observed of making distributions among the poor, in the cathedral, on the feast of St. Elizabeth. Galletti, *Gesch. Thuring.*, Vol. II, p. 275. It was the same at Marburg, according to the testimony of the learned Creuzer, in his *Compendium of Roman Antiquities*, cited by Mr. Staedtler.

time to reach Marburg and assist thereat. The 1st of May, 1236, was designated for this purpose.[1] As the day approached, the little city of Marburg and its environs were inundated with an immense crowd of faithful people of all ranks. If we may credit contemporary historians, twelve hundred thousand souls, united by faith and fervor, were gathered together around the tomb of the humble Elizabeth. All nations, all tongues, seemed to be represented. Many pilgrims of both sexes came from France, from Bohemia, and from her native country, the distant Hungary. They were themselves astonished at their own great numbers, and they said that for centuries there had not been gathered together so many people as were there to honor dear St. Elizabeth. The whole family of Thuringia were of course present; the Duchess Sophia, her mother-in-law, the Dukes Henry and Conrad, her brothers-in-law, happy in being able thus solemnly to make reparation for the wrongs which she had so nobly pardoned them. Her four little children were also there with a great number of princes and lords, priests and prelates. Among the latter, besides the Archbishop Siegfried of Mentz, who presided at the ceremony, there were the Archbishops of Cologne, Treves, and Bremen, the Bishops of Hamberg, Halberstadt, Merseburg, Bamberg, Worms, Spire, Paderborn, and Hildesheim. Finally, the Emperor Frederick II, then at the height of his power and glory, reconciled with the Pope, recently married to the young Isabella of England, so celebrated for her beauty, the Emperor himself suspended all his occupations and his

[1] This is the date given by Cæsarius of Heisterbach, the *Chronicon Hildesheimense*, and Rommel, *Hist. of Hesse*, p. 290. The Franciscan Breviary, however, fixes the feast of the translation on April 18; and Cæsarius says that in his time it was not celebrated until May 2, because the preceding day was the feast of the Apostles SS. Philip and James.

military expeditions to yield to the attraction which drew to Marburg so many of his subjects, and came publicly to render homage to her who had disdained to accept his hand that she might give herself to God.

The Teutonic Knights, having learned of the arrival of the Emperor, felt that it would be impossible to disinter the body of the Saint in his presence, and resolved to anticipate the appointed day. Three days before, the prior Ulric, accompanied by seven brothers, entered at night the church in which she rested, and after carefully closing all the doors, opened the vault which contained her tomb. The stone which had enclosed it had no sooner been removed than a delicious perfume was exhaled from her sacred remains. The religious were filled with admiration at this evidence of divine mercy, the more so as they knew she had been buried without aromatics or perfumes of any kind. They found the blessed body intact, without any appearance of corruption, although it had been buried nearly five years. Her hands were still joined upon her breast in the form of a cross. They said to one another that undoubtedly this delicate and precious body gave forth no odor of corruption in death, because in life it had recoiled before no infection or filth to relieve the poor. They removed it from the coffin, and having wrapped it in purple, deposited it in a leaden shrine, which they then placed in the vault without closing it, so that there might be no difficulty in raising it at the time of the ceremony.

At length, on the first of May, at daybreak, the multitude assembled about the church, and the Emperor was able with difficulty to make his way through the crowd and reach the entrance. He appeared penetrated with devotion and humility, going barefooted, clothed in a simple gray garment, such as had been worn by the glorious Saint whom he had come to honor. On his head, however, he wore the imperial crown. Around him were the princes

and electors of the empire, likewise crowned, and the bishops and abbots with their mitres. This stately procession moved towards the tomb of St. Elizabeth. Then it was, says one of her historians, that all the humiliations and self-abnegation which the dear saintly lady had suffered on earth were repaid with honor and glory. The Emperor wished to be the first to descend into the vault and raise the stone which covered it. The same pure and heavenly perfume which had before surprised and charmed the religious was at once exhaled over all who were present, and intensified the sentiments of fervent piety which animated them. The bishops wished themselves to lift the sacred body from the tomb, and the Emperor also assisted them. He kissed the coffin fervently, as soon as he saw it, and raised it with them. It was immediately sealed with the bishops' seals, and then carried solemnly by them, and by the Emperor, amidst a concert of voices and instruments, to the place which had been prepared for the exposition.

In the meantime an impatient eagerness filled the hearts of these thousands of faithful people, who crowded about the enclosure, waiting to obtain a view of the saintly relics, longing to gaze upon them, to touch them, to cover them with their kisses. "O happy land!" they exclaimed, "blessed with such a trust, guardian of such treasure! O happy day, upon which this treasure is revealed!" Finally, when the procession arrived in the midst of the people, when they beheld the precious body borne upon the shoulders of the Emperor, the princes, and the prelates, and breathed the sweet perfume which it exhaled, their enthusiasm knew no bounds. "O most blessed little body!" they cried, "that hast found such favor with the Lord, and possessest such virtue of healing men! Who would not be attracted by this fragrant perfume? Who would not be captivated by the wonderful sanctity and the marvellous

beauty of this saintly woman? Let heretics tremble, let the perfidious Jews be terrified! The faith of Elizabeth has confounded them. This is she who was looked upon as a fool, and her folly has confounded all the wisdom of this world! The angels have honored her tomb. And behold all the people who are gathered here; the Roman Emperor himself, and the great lords, approach her with humility! See the admirable mercy of the Divine Majesty! Behold her who, while living, despised the glory of the world, who shunned the society of the great, now magnificently honored by the sovereign majesty of the Pope and of the Emperor! She always chose the lowest place, sat upon the ground, slept in the dust; now she is lifted up and borne by royal hands! . . . And it is rightfully so, for she made herself poor, selling all that she had that she might purchase the inestimable pearl of eternity!"

The sacred body having been exposed to public veneration, the Holy Sacrifice was solemnly offered in her honor, the Mass proper of the Saint being sung by the Archbishop of Mentz. At the offertory the Emperor approached the shrine and placed a crown of gold[1] upon the head of dear St. Elizabeth, saying, "Since I could not crown her in life as my empress, I wish at least to crown her to-day as an immortal queen in the kingdom of God." He added a golden bowl, which he had been accustomed to use on festival occasions; and later on the skull of the Saint was enclosed in it. He himself then escorted the young Duke Hermann, son of the Saint, and the Empress conducted the young princesses, Sophia and Gertrude, to the place of offering. The aged Duchess Sophia, and her sons Henry and Conrad, also drew near the glorious remains of her whom they had too long ignored, remained for a considerable

[1] According to historians it was worth 4500 florins. The Passionary says that it was the Emperor's own crown.

time in prayer, and made offering of generous gifts in her honor. The nobility and the people pressed forward at the same time to the foot of the altar, where they saw her shrine, to do her homage by their offerings. The faithful of each of the different countries represented by the assemblage desired to perform the sacred offices in the manner, and with the religious music, to which they were accustomed in their own country, which added greatly to the duration of the ceremonies. The offerings were of almost incredible number and value; to these pious souls nothing seemed quite sufficient to adorn and embellish this bed, blossoming with miracles, upon which dear St. Elizabeth rested. The women gave their rings, their neck ornaments, and all sorts of jewels; others, even then, offered chalices, missals, and sacerdotal ornaments for the great and beautiful church which they demanded should be built at once in her honor, that she might rest therein with the honor due her, and that her soul might thence be the more disposed to invoke God for her brethren.

But presently another miracle appeared, to add yet more to the public veneration, and to prove the constant solicitude of our Lord for the glory of His Saint. On the following morning, upon opening the shrine, secured by the seal of the bishops, in which the sacred body rested, it was found bathed in an extremely fine and delicate oil, which diffused a perfume like to that of the most precious spikenard. This oil flowed, drop by drop, from the relics of the Saint, like beneficent dew from heaven; and as these drops were gathered up, or wiped away, others almost imperceptible appeared at once, forming a sort of vaporous perspiration.

At the sight of this the clergy and the faithful were moved to increased gratitude to the Divine Author of so many miracles, and enthusiasm for her who was the object of them. With that penetration which is the gift of faith,

they grasped at once the mystic and symbolical sense of this phenomenon.

"O beautiful miracle!" they exclaimed, "worthy of her, responsive to all our prayers! This body, which has been used and broken in so many exercises of piety and mortification, exhales a sweet perfume, as though the alabaster vase had been broken which contained the precious balm of St. Magdalene. Her body distils a sweet and holy oil, because her whole life overflowed with works of mercy, and as oil floats upon the surface of all liquids into which it is poured, so the mercy of God surmounts all His judgments. It flows especially from her feet, because they so often bore her to the cottages of the poor, and wheresoever she found any misery to relieve. This dear Elizabeth, like a beautiful and fruitful olive tree, blossoming with the flowers and exhaling the perfumes of virtue, received, like oil, the gift at once of giving light, of nourishing, and of healing. How many afflicted souls, how many suffering bodies has she not healed by her charity and by the example of her sanctity! How many thousands of the poor she has fed and satisfied with her own bread! By how many miracles has she not enlightened the whole Church! With good reason, then, this sweet fluid, this fragrant oil, comes to proclaim the sanctity of her who shone with a light so pure, healed with so much sweetness, nourished with such generosity, and who throughout her whole life shed so rich and fragrant a perfume."[1]

[1] Those who are at all familiar with the ascetic and legendary writings of the Middle Ages will not fail to recognize the profoundly symbolical meaning which is here attributed to oil. There are some admirable passages upon this subject in St. Bernard, serm. 15, *super Cantica*, and St. Gregory, Cap. 5, *In Reg.* A good summary of these views will also be found at the end of the legend of St. Walburge, by Bishop Philip of Eichstadt, in the Thesaurus of Canisius, Vol. IV, p. 250. Besides St. Elizabeth, mention is made of St. Hedwiges, her

This precious oil was gathered up with religious care and great zeal by the people, and many cures were obtained by the use of it in cases of severe illness or of dangerous wounds.

So many celestial favors consecrated by the supreme voice of the Church, and the honors which she had so solemnly decreed to the new Saint, could not but increase the number and the fervor of the faithful who came to her tomb, seeking either food for their piety or relief for their ills; her glory spread throughout the whole Christian world; it drew to Marburg a crowd of pilgrims as great as that which flocked from all parts of Europe to the tomb of St. James of Compostella.

Numerous miracles were the result of the tender confidence which led so many of the faithful poor to undertake so long and painful a journey.

Among all those of which the legends and chronicles have preserved for us an account, we will mention here two only, which seem to us to be of an especially pathetic character, and both of which clearly indicate the extent to which the faith in our Saint and the love which she inspired had been rapidly spread and deeply implanted, even in the most distant countries.

It was but natural that the devotion to Elizabeth should spread especially in Hungary where she was born, and that the accounts of her saintly life and the news of her canonization should excite intense joy and admiration in a country to which she belonged in an especial manner. At this time there were living at Strigonia, Hungary, an upright and devout father and mother, whose only daughter, a young child, had just died. They were plunged in intense grief by her death. After many tears

aunt, St. Walburge, St. Catherine, St. Demetrius martyr, and especially St. Nicholas of Myra, among the Saints whose remains received the privilege of distilling a salutary oil.

and lamentations they retired, but could not refrain from talking still during a portion of the night of their great sorrow. The mother, however, falling into a light sleep, had a vision which inspired her to take the body of her deceased daughter to the tomb of St. Elizabeth in Germany. On awaking she trusted in God, and said to her husband, "Do not let us bury our poor child yet, but take her with faith to St. Elizabeth, whom our Lord honors with so many miracles, that by her prayers life may be restored to her." The husband allowed himself to be convinced by his wife's inspiration. In the morning, when people were expecting to see the body of the child brought to the church and buried, the father and mother, to the great astonishment of every one, placed it in a basket and started off to carry it to the sanctuary of Elizabeth, heedless of the murmurs and the derision of the spectators. They journeyed on for thirty days, in the midst of tears and fatigues and trials of every kind. But at the end of this time God had compassion upon their faith and their sorrow, and yielding to the merits of His dear Elizabeth, returned the innocent soul of this child to the inanimate body which was offered to Him with so much simplicity, and restored it to life. Despite their unbounded joy, the parents still wished to accomplish their pilgrimage to St. Elizabeth; they brought their resuscitated daughter with them to Marburg. After having made their act of thanksgiving there, they returned to Hungary to enjoy their miraculous happiness. This same young woman afterwards accompanied to Germany a daughter of the King of Hungary, given in marriage to the Duke of Bavaria. Returning with her princess to Ratisbon, she there entered a Dominican convent, of which she became the prioress, and in which she was still living in great sanctity when Theodoric wrote her life.

At the other extremity of Europe, in England, there

was at about this time a noble lady, who, after living twenty years with her husband, saw him die childless, to her great regret. To console herself in her widowhood and loneliness, she clothed herself in a gray habit, cut off her hair, and adopted twelve poor persons as her children. She lodged them in her own house, nourished and clothed them, and washed and served them with her own hands. Wherever she met a poor or suffering person, she went to him and offered him alms for the love of God and of St. Elizabeth; for she had heard Elizabeth spoken of and loved her more than anything in the world, and more than all the other Saints of God. The thought of her dear Saint was ever present to her heart; night and day she meditated upon her blessed life.

In God's appointed time this noble and pious lady died. In the midst of sorrow which her death had awakened, her confessor came to say to those who were mourning for her, that she must be taken to the tomb of St. Elizabeth, because while living she had made a vow to go there. Her friends, following his counsel, crossed the sea, travelled a long distance by land, and after a journey of seven weeks arrived at Marburg. After they had invoked the Saint with great fervor, the body of the pious lady suddenly revived, and she returned to life saying, "How happy I am! I have rested upon the breast of St. Elizabeth." Her friends wished to take her back to England, but she refused to leave the places sanctified by her celestial friend; and she lived there fifteen years a most saintly life, but in perfect silence, speaking absolutely to no one save her confessor. He having asked her one day why she observed this silence, she replied, "Whilst I rested on the breast of Elizabeth, I had too much happiness and joy to occupy myself now with anything else but to regain that happiness for all eternity!"

Amidst these beautiful and touching acts of homage,

offered in exchange for so many blessings and so many graces, the body of our dear Elizabeth rested for three centuries under the vaults of her magnificent church, and under the protection of the Knights of the Teutonic Order, constant Crusaders of the Faith. But her heart, that most noble part of her, was asked for and obtained by Godfrey, Bishop of Cambray, solemnly translated by him to his espicopal city, and placed under the altar of his cathedral. Neither history nor tradition reveal to us the motives which could have induced the faithful of Hesse to part with so precious a treasure, in favor of a distant diocese. But who would not recognize therein a mysterious dispensation of Providence, which would have this heart, so tender and pure, rest at Cambray near another heart, worthy of hers by its humility, its charity, and its ardent love of God, the heart of Fenelon?

In the meantime devotion to St. Elizabeth spread throughout the whole Christian world; while thousands of pilgrims came to honor her tomb, numerous churches sprang up, at distant points, under her invocation; everywhere, and especially at Treves, Strasburg, Cassel, Winchester, Prague, and throughout Belgium, convents, hospitals, asylums of moral and physical suffering, took her as their patroness and protectress near God. Her festival, pursuant to the orders of the Sovereign Pontiff, was also observed by the entire Church, and in some localities with a ceremony and pomp quite peculiar. The diocese of Hildesheim was especially distinguished for the solemnity with which this beautiful feast was celebrated there, and for the harmony of the chants which resounded in her honor, in the beautiful cathedral built in honor of Mary, around the gigantic rosebush of Louis le Debonnaire. Innocent IV, almost immediately upon ascending the pontifical throne, granted an indulgence of a year and forty days to those who should visit the church and the

tomb at Marburg during the last three days of Holy Week. Sixtus IV granted an indulgence of fifty years and as many quarantines to all the faithful who, being duly penitent and having confessed their sins, should visit the churches of the order of St. Francis, in honor of St. Elizabeth, on the day of her feast. And at Rome to-day an indulgence of a hundred years may be gained in one of the seven basilicas of the eternal city, that of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem, and at the church of St. Mary of the Angels; and further, a plenary indulgence at the Church of the Third Order, known as SS. Cosmas and Damian near the Forum. Nor were the rich inspirations of the liturgy, of true Christian poetry, wanting to our Saint. Sequences, hymns, and numerous anthems were composed and used generally in her honor; the religious orders, and especially those of St. Francis, St. Dominic, Citeaux, and Prémontré, dedicated, each of them, a special office to her. These outpourings of faith and gratitude for her glory, by contemporary generations, had that peculiar charm of naïvéte, grace, and tender piety which characterizes the ancient liturgies, to-day so cruelly forgotten. And thus was realized and fulfilled, for that Elizabeth whom we have seen so full of humilty and contempt of self, the whole circle of those distinguished honors, those ineffable recompenses, that incomparable glory, which the Church has created and reserved for her Saints.

Yes, I say it without fear, Saints of God, what glory is comparable to yours? What human memory is cherished, preserved, and consecrated like unto yours? What popularity is there which can be compared to yours in the hearts of Christian people? Had you but sought this human glory, the contempt of which is your fairest title, your most earnest efforts could not have raised you to that which you have acquired in trampling it under your feet. Conquerors, legislators, great writers, men of genius are

forgotten, or shine forth only at certain intervals in the vacillating memories of men; the great majority of them remain indifferent and unknown. But you, O blessed children of the earth which you glorify, and of heaven which you populate, you are known and loved by every Christian, for every Christian has at least one among you as his friend, his patron, the confidant of his sweetest thoughts, the depository of his anxious hopes, the protector of his happiness, the consoler of his sorrows! Linked with the eternal existence of the Church, you are like her, impassible and immutable in your glory. Each year, at least once, the sun rises on your invocation; and in every quarter of the globe thousands of Christians salute and congratulate one another simply because they have the happiness of bearing your name. And this sacred name is celebrated, chanted, proclaimed in every sanctuary of the Faith, by thousands of innocent and pure voices; voices of spotless virgins, voices of heroes of charity, voices of Levites and Priests, from the Supreme Pontiff to the humble religious in his cell, who thus in unison respond, with an echo the most beautiful on earth, to the concert of the angels in heaven. Once more, Saints of God, what glory is to be compared with yours?

CHAPTER XXXIII

As to what became of the Children and Relations of Dear St. Elizabeth after her Death; the Many Great Saints who sprang from her Race

O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate; immortalis est enim memoria illius; quoniam et apud Deum nota est et apud homines, . . . in perpetuum coronata triumphat, incoinquinatorum certaminum praemium vincens. — Sap. IV, 1, 2.

I shall be pardoned, I am sure, for giving here some brief details regarding the fate of Elizabeth's children, as well as that of the principal persons who have figured in the history of her precious life.

Following the order in which the latter departed this life, we first find King Andrew, the father of our Saint. From the moment of receiving news of her death, he had been plunged in profound sorrow, produced especially by the thought that he had been unable to appreciate and sufficiently honor his child's virtue, and that he had so easily resigned himself to leaving her in misery and humiliations. He had the consolation, however, of seeing her sanctity recognized by the Church and proclaimed to the Christian world; but shortly after her canonization he died himself.

Sophia, Elizabeth's mother-in-law, also died in 1238, after having assisted at the solemn translation of her whose high destiny she had so long ignored. She was buried in the convent of St. Catherine at Eisenach, which her husband, Duke Hermann, had founded.

The most fervent of the admirers and champions of the Saint, her brother-in-law, Conrad, did not long survive the signal reparation which he made for the wrongs he had done her in former days. His piety, courage, and great modesty caused him to be elected Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, which he had entered through a spirit of penance. He devoted his abilities and his wealth, in great measure, to the construction of the basilica at Marburg which bears Elizabeth's name, and of which he had the glory of being the founder. It was without doubt in order to supervise more closely this great work, or perhaps through affection for the places made sacred by his saintly sister, that he chose the city of Marburg as the centre and home of the order of which he was the head, and that he built there the palace called the *Commandery*, the remains of which are still to be seen. His prolonged sojourns in Hesse did not prevent him from directing the new development which the Teutonic Order achieved in Prussia, where the Duke of Masovia had called him to the help of the Christians against the pagans. Conrad fought there with ability and courage; he extended the new possessions of the order, and received from the Pope the investiture of this province, which was destined to become the theatre of the most brilliant successes of the order. But before ending his life he wished to return again to Rome; and having arrived there, he fell seriously ill. During this illness he attained such a degree of interior, as well as sensible, purity, that he could not, without intense pain, endure the presence of any one who had committed a mortal sin. Those who attended him found that they were obliged to abstain from all sin. He had as his confessor the Abbot of Hagen, of the Order of Citeaux. One day as this venerable religious approached his bed, he saw that he was wrapt in an ecstasy. When the Prince came to himself again, the abbot asked him

what he had seen in his vision. "I was before the tribunal of the Eternal Judge," replied Conrad, "and my future lot was under severe consideration. Finally justice wished that I should be condemned to five years in purgatory. My good sister Elizabeth approached the tribunal and obtained for me the remission of this punishment. You may know therefore that I shall die of this illness, and that I shall enjoy eternal glory." He died, in fact, after having directed that his body should be taken to Marburg, to rest near the Saint, in the church which he had commenced for her. His tomb may still be seen, upon which he is represented devoutly asleep in the Lord, holding in his hand the cord which he presented to the people to scourge him on the ruins of Fritzlar.[1]

If Conrad was able to make complete reparation for all his offences against God and St. Elizabeth, it was not so with her other brother-in-law, Henry Raspe, whose life was painfully interwoven with that of the children of our Saint, of whom we are about to speak. The children appear in all the records that we have found concerning them, penetrated with gratitude to God for having deigned to make them children of a saint, and justly proud before men of so glorious an origin; in all their charters and other official acts, they invariably note their distinguishing quality of *son* or *daughter* of *St. Elizabeth*, before all other titles of sovereignty or nobility. Two of them, her two youngest daughters, the second Sophia and Gertrude, completed their lives peacefully in the retreats which they had chosen for themselves, in the society of virgins consecrated to our Lord, one of them at Kitzingen and the other at Aldenberg, near Wetzlar. Both became abbesses of their monasteries. Gertrude was elected in 1249, and governed her house for forty-nine years; she walked worthily in the footsteps of her mother, by her piety and

[1] See above, p. 405.

her generosity to the poor; miracles even were attributed to her, and she always bore the name of Blessed. She died August 15, 1297, at the age of seventy years. At the request of the Emperor, Louis of Bavaria, Pope Clement VI granted indulgences to those who observed her feast. Her tomb is still seen at Aldenberg, as well as many precious relics of her saintly mother, which she had gathered together with loving care.

Elizabeth's other two children, her son Hermann and the eldest of her daughters, Sophia, had a very different fate, and were, as their mother had been, victims of the injustice of their fellow-men.

Hermann, in 1239, having reached the age of sixteen years, had taken possession of the estates of his father, which his uncle, Duke Henry, had administered until then. Soon afterwards he made a journey to France to visit the saintly King Louis IX, and found himself, as we have seen, in the full court of Saumur, where his character as son of St. Elizabeth attracted universal homage, and where Queen Blanche of Castile especially bestowed upon him marks of the most tender affection.[1] He married Helen, daughter of Duke Otho of Brunswick. Everything promised for this young prince a brilliant and happy future, when he died at eighteen years of age, in 1241, at Creuzburg, where he was born. His premature death was generally attributed to poison administered to him by a woman named Bertha of Seebach, at the instigation of his unworthy uncle Henry. Before breathing his last, the unfortunate young man signified his desire to be buried at Marburg near his blessed mother; but Henry, who seized at once upon the sovereignty, was unwilling to grant him even this consolation; and fearing lest his mother would raise him from the dead, as she had so many others, he had his remains taken to the sepulchre

[1] See above, p. 363.

of the dukes, at Reinhartsbrunn, where his sepulchral stone may still be seen by the side of that of his father.

Henry Raspe, now the sole master and legitimate heir of the vast possessions of the house of Thuringia, soon became the leader of the opposition aroused more and more every day in Germany by the attempts of the Emperor Frederick II against the independence of the nobility and the rights of the Church. Pope Innocent IV having fulminated against Frederick, at the Council of Lyons, a sentence of deposition, the Duke of Thuringia naturally found himself in the ranks to supersede him. Although we may believe that the imperial crown was the object of his supreme ambition, he protested, nevertheless, his incapacity; but the Pope urged him to devote himself to the welfare of Christianity, and sent him material aid. He allowed himself to be elected King of the Romans, at the Diet of Frankfort in 1240, and was crowned the following year. He waged war with some success against Frederick and his son Conrad, but did not long enjoy his new dignity. In 1248 death called him away in his turn; and although he had been married three times, he left no children. Christian people recognized in this extinction of his race the just chastisement of his perfidy to Elizabeth, and of the crime which was imputed to him against his nephew. He had requested, however, that his heart should be deposited in the Dominican convent which he had founded at Eisenach, in expiation of his misdeeds towards his sister-in-law.

Upon his death Thuringia was given over to all the horrors of a long war of succession. The male descent of the ancient dukes of Thuringia being extinguished in the person of King Henry, his vast possessions devolved upon the female line. Accordingly Sophia, the eldest of the daughters of St. Elizabeth and Duke Louis, married, as we have seen, to the Duke of Brabant, Henry II, the

Magnanimous (celebrated among other titles for his devotion to the Order of Citeaux), presented herself to receive the inheritance of her father, in her own name, as well as in that of her son Henry, called the *Child*, three years of age only. She was recognized without much difficulty in Hesse, which she governed during the minority of her son with much wisdom and energy. But for Thuringia she found a formidable competitor in her own cousin Henry, called the *Illustrious*, Margrave of Misnia, son of Guta, sister of Duke Louis and King Henry. This prince, profiting by the dissensions which had broken out in Thuringia immediately after the death of Henry, and by those, too, which were disrupting the whole Empire, succeeded in getting possession of a great part of Thuringia, and notably of the castle of Wartburg. There was no longer an emperor universally recognized to render justice in the Holy Roman Empire since the fall of the house of Swabia. Sophia obtained the assistance of a brave and devoted prince, Albert, Duke of Brunswick. But in spite of all the efforts of this ally, in spite of the courage with which Sophia herself took part in all the expeditions of the war, Henry succeeded in retaining the authority which he had usurped. I will not enter into the details of this cruel contest; I will note merely some significant traits of Sophia's character, which will illustrate how the people, faithful to the memory of their dear Saint, had associated with the cause of her descendants all the prestige of poetry and tradition.

It is said that in the first conference that took place between Sophia and the Margrave, the latter showed a disposition to listen to his cousin; but while they were talking, his marshal, Lord Schlottheim, took him one side and said to him, "My Lord, what are you going to do? If it were possible for you to have one foot in heaven and the other upon Wartburg, it would be necessary for you to with-

draw the one from heaven in order to have a better hold upon Wartburg." Henry allowed himself to be convinced, and going to the Duchess, said to her, "My dear cousin, I shall have to reflect upon these matters, and take council with my vassals." Then Sophia burst into tears, and taking her glove from her right hand, flung it into the air, saying, "O enemy of all justice! I mean thou, Satan, I fling thee my glove; take it, and with it all perfidious counsellors." The glove was snatched up in the air and disappeared, and sometime afterwards the counsellor died a miserable death.

Later, in 1254, in a second conference, Sophia, despairing of convincing her rival by reason, or overcoming him by force, thought that she might appeal to his religious sentiments; she brought with her one of the bones of the body of her sainted mother, and demanded that he should swear upon the sacred relic of her who had so greatly honored Thuringia that he believed her authority in that country to be founded upon right and justice. The noble and touching faith of the daughter in the influence of her mother and the conscience of her adversary was deceived. Henry swore without hesitation, and his oath was supported by that of twenty of his knights.

The inhabitants of Eisenach had declared themselves energetically in favor of Sophia, as though they wanted to atone for their former ingratitude to St. Elizabeth by their devotion to her daughter. They even besieged Wartburg, where the Margrave's forces were garrisoned, and built two forts, the better to block the castle. But Henry surprised the city by night, and through treachery got possession of it. He put to death many of the citizens who were partisans of the daughter and of the grandson of Elizabeth. In order to terrify the others, he had the barbarity to order their most zealous representative, a man named Welspeche, to be attached to an engine of war and precipitated from

the heights of Wartburg into Eisenach. The intrepid citizen, as he was hurled through the air, continued to cry out, "Thuringia still belongs to the Child of Brabant." Tradition records that he was subjected three times to this torture, repeating constantly the same words, "Thuringia belongs to the Child of Brabant," and that he died only after his third fall.

Sophia soon afterwards arrived from Hesse before Eisenach, and approached the gate of St. George, which she found closed. She summoned the inhabitants to open it, and as she received no reply, seizing an axe she struck a violent blow upon the oaken door, making so deep an indentation that it could be seen two hundred years afterwards.

Finally, in 1265, Albert, the Duke of Brunswick, being completely beaten and made a prisoner by the Margrave's son, it was necessary to come to some definite agreement. Sophia was obliged to renounce all claim to Thuringia, which remained the exclusive right of the house of Misnia. In return, the sovereignty of Hesse was guaranteed to her son, Henry the Child, and his posterity. This division of the two provinces has continued ever since, and the present houses of Hesse and Saxony are descendants of the two rival princes whose rights were determined by this treaty. Sophia did not die until 1284, at the age of sixty years, after spending her whole life in watching over the prosperity of her country and her family. She rests at Marburg, in the same tomb with her son, and in the church consecrated to her sainted mother. Her statue may be seen there, recumbent and in prayer, according to the custom of Catholic ages, and having at her side the son, still a child, over whom she had watched with so much courage and maternal solicitude. Her figure is all worn away by the kisses of pilgrims who bestowed upon her some of their love for her mother.

Henry I, called the Child, the son of Sophia, and first sovereign of Hesse as a separate and independent State, reigned until 1308 with much glory, and surrounded by the affection of his people, whom he successfully protected against pillage and invasion. He was sixty-five years of age at the time of his death, although he is represented as a little child in the monument in which he appears with his mother. He is the parent stem of all the different branches of the house of Hesse, with whom most of the reigning families of Europe are allied, sharing thus in the glorious privilege of having St. Elizabeth as an ancestor.

After having given these particulars regarding Elizabeth's descendants, may I be permitted to say a word concerning the saintly characters that we find in the family from which she herself sprang, and upon whom her example necessarily exerted a powerful influence? Of the maternal line, her aunt, St. Hedwiges, Duchess of Poland and Silesia, survived her; and as we have seen that the reputation of this princess for piety had made a strong impression upon Elizabeth while yet a mere child, we may readily believe that the Duchess Hedwiges was in no small degree fortified in her fervor and her austerities by the accounts which she must have received of the admirable life of her young niece, and by the solemn proclamation of her blessed immortality in heaven and on earth. Hedwiges would seem to have been eager to press forward in the footsteps of her who, while younger, had yet gained in advance that haven which they were both destined to reach so gloriously. Upon the death of Elizabeth, a veil which the Saint had used was sent to her. Hedwiges cherished this precious relic with the greatest veneration and wore it till the moment of her death; and certainly no one could be more worthy to put on this symbolic garment. Married at the age of twelve to Duke Henry the Bearded, after having had six children, while

still quite young, she and her husband made a vow to live thereafter as brother and sister. She persuaded him to found a grand abbey for the religious of Citeaux, in a place where he had fallen into a deep swamp, from which an angel had rescued him by reaching him a branch. This monastery was called Trebnitz, because when the Duke asked the new religious what they needed, they replied that they needed nothing — in Polish, *trzeba niç*. Hedwiges had her daughter Gertrude elected abbess of this house, to which she shortly afterwards retired herself, and where, with the permission of her husband, she took the habit of a religious, but without taking the vow either of obedience or of poverty, in order not to be restricted in her charities. In her humiliations and her extraordinary mortifications, she emulated throughout her life her saintly niece. In reading the account of the incredible austerities which she inflicted upon her frail and delicate body, one asks himself which is most to be admired, the indomitable strength of her will, or the wonderful help given by our Lord to fallen nature, eager to rise again to Him. She anxiously sought for the lowest place in all things. Deeply penetrated with that spirit which saved the Canaanite woman of the Gospel, and which led her to claim from Jesus the crumbs that fell from the table of the children of God, Hedwiges often wished for no other food than the crumbs which fell from the table of the monks and religious whom she loved to serve. But it was especially in her good charity and the intense compassion of her heart that she emulated our dear Elizabeth. "She had so tender a heart," says a pious hagiographer, "that she could not see any one weeping without shedding tears freely, nor rest herself, when she saw others in trouble or affliction. She always had poor people who eat at her table, whom she served on her knees before sitting down herself. Often, when no one observed her, she would kiss the foot-

steps of the poor who had passed by, honoring in them Jesus Christ, Who, being the King of glory, made Himself poor for us. She loved the poor and poverty so tenderly and passionately that she bought from them the morsels of bread that the religious had given them in charity, which she eat and frequently kissed as the bread of angels, and as something sacred. Among others, she had thirteen of the most needy poor in honor of our Redeemer Jesus Christ and His Apostles, whom she took with her wherever she went, taking care that they were comfortably lodged and provided for, and made them take their meals before her, waiting upon them herself. When she eat, she sent them the best of whatever she had, and was so charitable that she always shared with the poor anything that was presented to her, even if it were nothing but a pear, because she did not relish it if the poor had not first tasted of it."

She never wanted her vassals or her serfs pressed for the payment of their rents or debts; she constantly attended the sessions of the courts in which the cases of the poor were tried, and when she saw that the judges were disposed to be severe, she caused sentence to be pronounced by the chaplain who accompanied her.

Her husband, whose respect for her was equal to his love, conceived a most touching means of testifying his sympathy with her in her compassion for the poor people. He directed that when Hedwiges passed the public prisons, the doors should be thrown open and the prisoners liberated for love of her.

All her exercises of piety were performed with great fervor; she assisted every day at as many masses as there were priests where she was, shedding many tears during each one. She had an ardent devotion especially for the Blessed Virgin; she kept with her constantly an image of the Divine Mother, with which she often conversed in her

simplicity, which she carried in her hand when she went to visit the sick, and made use of to bless them, often thereby curing them. Her husband, having been wounded and made a prisoner by his rival, the Duke Conrad, she went all alone on foot to see this enemy, excited and haughty as he was over his victory. When she appeared before him, he thought he beheld an angel, and without attempting any resistance, he at once granted her peace and the liberty of her husband. A short time afterwards she lost her beloved husband, and then her son Henry, whom she loved most tenderly, and who was killed while fighting for the Faith and the independence of Europe against the hordes of Tartary. She supported these two losses with that calmness and resignation which is born of supreme love. But her own death soon followed this separation. On the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, in the year 1243, the religious who attended her saw a company of beautiful young women, brilliant with a supernatural splendor, come to visit Hedwiges, who said to them with great joy, "Welcome, dear saints and good friends, Magdalene, Catherine, Thecla, Ursula, and all of you who have come to see me." Then they spoke in Latin, and the religious no longer understood what they said. On October 15 following, she yielded up her soul, blessing God. Her sanctity being confirmed by many miracles, she was canonized by Pope Clement IV in 1267; her solemn translation occurred the following year. When her body was taken from the tomb, the little image of the Blessed Virgin, which she had loved so well, was found clasped in the fingers of her hand.

While St. Hedwiges was throwing so much lustre upon the maternal line of Elizabeth, the influence of our dear Saint was producing fruits, if not more precious, at least more numerous still, in her father's family, in that illustrious house of Hungary, which alone of all the royal

houses of Europe, counted already in its ranks three kings canonized — St. Stephen, St. Emeric, and St. Ladislas. Bela IV, the brother of our Elizabeth and successor of his father Andrew, proved himself worthy to be the brother of such a sister and the father of two other saints, by the devotion, the courage, and the resignation which he displayed during the thirty-five years of his reign and his contests with the victorious Tartars. In 1244 he authorized by a patent the foundation of a church in honor of his sister by two faithful servants, David and Furkas, who had attended her in Thuringia. Then, led on, as it were, by her example, he entered the Third Order of St. Francis, as she had done, and directed that he should be buried in the church which the Franciscans had built at Strigonia under the invocation of St. Elizabeth, despite the opposition of those who urged him not to abandon the ancient sepulchre of the kings. The second brother of our Saint, Coloman, seems to have been still more inebriated by the perfume of perfection which exhaled from the life of his sister. Having married a Polish princess of great beauty, Salome, daughter of the Duke of Cracow, who had been betrothed to him, and educated with him, from the age of three years, he made with her, on the day of their marriage, a vow of perpetual chastity, which he observed with the most heroic fidelity. Elected King of Gallicia, he defended this part of Poland against the Tartars, and died gloriously, fighting against them for his country and his God. His widow founded a convent of Franciscans and another of the Sisters of St. Clare. She took the veil herself with the latter, and lived there to the end of her life in the practice of the most heroic virtues, and honored by extraordinary favors of divine mercy. On the day of her death (1268), a sweet harmony was heard in the air and voices which sung these words, *Fronduit, floruit virgula Aaron.* One of the religious, noticing that her

countenance wore an expression of supreme joy, and that she was smiling complacently, said to her, "What is it, madam? Do you see anything agreeable that can cause you to rejoice in the midst of so much suffering?" "O yes," replied the happy woman; "I see Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of our Lord, which delights me beyond measure." At the moment she expired there appeared what seemed a little star going out from her lips and ascending towards heaven.

The daughters of Bela IV, nieces consequently of Elizabeth, nearer than their father, by reason of their sex, to her who was the honor of their family, wished likewise to emulate her in the austerity and sanctity of their lives. One of them, known in the Church under the name of the Blessed Margaret of Hungary, was constantly preoccupied, as her historian tells us, with the example which her glorious aunt had left her; and everything in her life testifies to this disposition on her part. Dedicated before her birth to our Lord by her mother, Mary, daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople, as propitiatory offering to obtain from heaven some relief from the evils which the Tartars were inflicting upon Hungary, her birth was signalized by a brilliant victory over the infidels, as though God wished thus to signify His acceptance of the offering. Her devout parents, faithful to their promise, obtained her admission to a Dominican convent when she was three years and a half old. Gifted with an intelligence and zeal beyond her years, she took the veil when she was but twelve years of age, although her angelic beauty and her exalted birth had led several powerful princes to seek her hand; and there she spent the remaining twenty-four years of her life. This time, so short apparently, was wholly occupied by her in works of charity, in acts of the most fervent piety, and in supernatural austerities; in a word, in everything which can at once expand the love of God

in a pure heart and show it forth exteriorly. Mary and the Cross were particularly the ways by which she raised this love towards Him Who was its object. She could never mention the name of the Blessed Virgin without adding at once, *Mother of God and my hope.* When she was four years of age, she saw a cross for the first time, and asked the religious, "What is that tree?" "It was on such a tree," one of them replied, "that the Son of God shed His blood for the salvation of the world." At these words the child ran forward to the cross and kissed it passionately. After that, whenever she saw a cross she threw herself upon her knees to adore it; and before going to sleep, she would place over her eyes a crucifix, so that in opening them it might be the first object to meet her sight. God bestowed upon her at once the gift of miracles and of prophecy, and the grace of ruling over the hearts of her countrymen without ever leaving her convent. She threw so much grace and charm of manner into the care which she gave the poor and the sick, who sought her, that long after her death, to designate anything as awkward or disagreeable, the Hungarians used to say, by way of a proverb, "Not Sister Margaret's way of doing." She was but twenty-eight years of age when God snatched her away from her family, her country, and the order which she had honored, to reunite her with St. Elizabeth in heaven.

Her sister Cunegundes, or Kinga, married in 1239 to Boleslas the Chaste, Duke of Poland, induced her husband to make with her a solemn and public vow of perpetual chastity, which they scrupulously observed during forty years of married life. Becoming a widow in 1279, at the same time as her sister Yolanda, married also to a Boleslas, Duke of Kalisz in Poland, they both resolved to take the veil, and after having distributed all their goods to the poor, entered, as their aunt Salome had done, the Order of

Poor Clares, which seems to have offered such irresistible attractions to the princesses of that age. Cunegundes died in 1292, after having given an example of the greatest austerity, and having received the gift of miracles. She has always been regarded in Poland as a Saint and patroness of the country; her tomb has been the object of the fervent veneration of all the Slavonic races, and the object of numerous pilgrimages; Monday in each week was especially consecrated to her. The prayers which these pious pilgrims made use of have been preserved; they invoked the blessed Cunegundes at the same time with the glorious Virgin Mary and St. Clare. More than three centuries after her death, the devotion which she had inspired was so far from being chilled that Sigismund, King of Poland, addressed in 1628 a very urgent letter to Pope Urban VIII, to obtain the official canonization of her whom the Poles had for so long a time proclaimed as their guardian Saint. In 1690 Alexander VIII approved of the public devotion that was paid to her, and later Clement XI solemnly recognized her as the patroness of Poland and Lithuania.[1]

In our own days her memory is especially venerated by the simple and pious population who inhabit the Polish slope of the Krapacks Mountains, where she lived a long time herself, and where she founded many churches and monasteries. The people there relate many touching traditions concerning her, and according to the accounts that we have recently received from Poland, her memory is as fresh to-day in Catholic hearts as though she had been dead but a few years.

As if this house of Hungary had been destined to serve

[1] Wadding, in an appendix, Vol. V, p. 432, speaks of a fourth niece of Elizabeth, named Constance, sister of the blessed Margaret, Cunegundes, and Yolanda, who, like the last two, became a poor Clare, and died at Leopold in 1300.

as a sort of nursery of heaven, the princesses of this blessed race, married, as Elizabeth was, to foreign sovereigns, who were not especially illustrious themselves, seem at least to have had the privilege of giving birth to saints. Thus Elizabeth's sister Yolande, married to James the Conqueror, King of Aragon, was the grandmother of St. Elizabeth of Portugal; and Constance, sister of King Andrew, was the mother of Agnes of Bohemia, of whom the Sovereign Pontiff, as we have seen, spoke in such magnificent terms.[1] After having refused the hand of the King of England, of the King of the Romans, and of the Emperor Frederick II, even at the risk of bringing the scourge of war upon her country; after having spent forty-six years in her monastery, girt with the cord of St. Francis, and walking barefooted in the paths traced by St. Clare and St. Elizabeth, in the most exemplary practices of humility and poverty and charity, Agnes died in 1283, and has always since been venerated as a saint in Bohemia and Germany, although the Holy See did not see fit to proclaim her solemn canonization in answer to the prayer of the Emperor Charles IV, whose life was twice saved by her invocation.

As for St. Elizabeth of Portugal,[2] it would require almost a volume to recount all the traits of her beautiful and glorious life, and we can devote but a few lines to it. Born in 1271 of Peter, King of Aragon, and Constance of Sicily, she seemed predestined to a celestial glory by the name which was given her; for, contrary to the custom then universally followed in Spain, of naming the princesses after their mother or their grandmother, she was called Elizabeth, after our Elizabeth, who was the maternal aunt of her father. At the age of fifteen she was married

[1] See above, p. 421.

[2] For her descent, as for all others referred to in this chapter, see the two genealogical tables in the Appendix.

to Denis, King of Portugal; but far from finding, like her holy patroness, a husband loving and worthy of her, she was for a long time oppressed by his evil treatment and afflicted by his infidelity. She was only the more faithful to all the duties of a Christian wife, and sought to win him back by increased tenderness and unfailing patience. To the ladies who reproached her for her too great tolerance, she replied, "Must I then cease to be patient because of the King's faults, and add my sins to his? I prefer to take God only, and his dear Saints, as my confidants in my shame, and to soften the heart of my husband by my own gentleness." She went so far in her forbearance and resignation as to smile upon the mistresses of the King, and to educate his natural children with her own, watching with the same care over their safety and well-being. However, the eldest of his legitimate sons, indignant at his father's conduct, revolted against him. The King pretended to regard Elizabeth as his accomplice in this revolt, stripped her of her dower and all her possessions, and confined her in a fortress. As soon as she obtained her release from this unjust imprisonment, she at once devoted all her energy to the task of bringing about a reconciliation between her husband and her son. Finding her efforts of no avail, she selected the moment when the army of the King and that of her son were drawn up in battle, and about to attack one another, to mount her horse and ride on alone between the two lines, amid a shower of arrows, and implored the combatants to cease fighting. The soldiers, less inexorable than their leaders, and impressed by her self-devotion, dropped their arms and compelled father and son to make peace. Some time afterwards she succeeded in restoring harmony between two of her sons who were engaged in a cruel war against each other; and then between her brother, the King of Aragon, and her son-in-law, the King of

Castile, at the solicitation of the people of Spain, who obliged their sovereigns to accept her as mediatrix. And thus she merited that title which was conferred upon her by the universal Church, *Mother of peace and of the country.*[1] When her husband was seized with a mortal illness, she alone performed for him the most trying services, and received his last breath. After which she clothed herself in the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, which she had kept carefully put away for a long time, ready for the moment of her widowhood. She made a pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella for the soul of her husband, and there offered for his intention the crown of jewels which she had worn on the day of her wedding. She spent the rest of her life in the practice of every virtue, giving her services every day to thirty poor people in a hospital which she had built near her palace, under the name of her holy aunt and patroness, whom she strove to emulate in her charity and austerity, as well as in the faithful observance of all the ceremonies of the Church. She had an intense love for the offices and for religious music, and assisted every day at two High Masses, the first of which was for the intention of her deceased husband. A year before her death she again visited St. James of Compostella, but this time on foot, disguised as a peasant and begging her bread all along the way, in order not to be recognized and interrupted by the veneration of the people. Finally, in 1336, her son, the King of Portugal, having declared war against her son-in-law the King of Castile, she resolved, in spite of great age, to summon up such strength as she had left for a seven days' journey, for the purpose of reconciling them. And this last victory, too, she won; but the fatigues of the journey,

[1] Elisabeth, pacis et patriae mater, in coelo triumphans, dona nobis pacem. — Anthem of the *Magnificat*, for the Feast of St. Elizabeth, in the Roman Breviary, July 8.

undertaken in the severe heat of summer, brought her to the brink of the grave. On the eve of her death she exclaimed, "Look, the Blessed Virgin is coming, clothed in a white robe, to announce to me my happiness." She died on July 8. Three centuries after her death, Pope Urban VIII canonized her with great solemnity, and composed himself one of the most beautiful offices of the Roman liturgy in her honor. And thus was consecrated again, in heaven and on earth, that beautiful name, Elizabeth, which I have so often had to repeat, and which it is always so sweet for me to pronounce.[1]

[1] Saepe fatae et semper dulciter nominandae Elisabeth, Dict. IV Ancill., p. 2011. I could not conclude this sacred genealogy of the house of Elizabeth without recalling the fact that St. Louis of Sicily, Bishop of Toulouse, one of the most illustrious names in the Seraphic Order, was her grand-nephew, being a son of Charles the Lame, King of Sicily, and Mary of Hungary, daughter of Stephen V, nephew of Elizabeth. See the genealogical table. I should also add, that if in this chapter I happen to have given the name *saint* or *blessed* to those whom the Church has not solemnly invested with this title, it is always in the spirit of the most complete submission to her sovereign authority, and especially to the decree of Urban VIII on this subject.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Beautiful Church that was built at Marburg in Honor of Dear St. Elizabeth; the Profanation of her Precious Relics; Conclusion of the History

Ave, gemma speciosa,
Mulierum sidus, rosa,
Ex regali stirpe nata,
Nunc in coelis coronata,
Salve, rosa pietatis:
Salve, flos Hungariae:
Salve, fulgens margarita:
In coelesti sede sita:
Roga regem Majestatis
Ut nos salvet hodie
Lumen mittens caritatis
Ac coelestis gratiae.

Ancient Office of St. Elizabeth.

In the centre of the valley which is watered by the winding course of the Lahn, an eminence projects and is detached from the chain of hills which surrounds it. The ancient castle of Marburg, built by Elizabeth's grandson, crowns its summit; the houses and gardens of the city and of the university are grouped in terraces on the sides and at the base; the two slender towers and the high naves of the Church of St. Elizabeth rise up between the foot of the hill and the banks of the river, which encircles the city. Outside of her gates, green meadows, charming gardens, long and beautiful walks, attract the traveller and lead him on till he reaches the old shade trees which cover the surrounding hillsides, from which at his ease

he may enjoy the extraordinary beauty of the view. Perhaps it is my affection for everything which the memory of St. Elizabeth has sanctified that carries me away, but it seems to me that I have never seen, outside of Italy, a spot more picturesque, more attractive, more in accord with the memories that are linked with it. In whatever direction one turns his steps in the environs of Marburg, as he looks toward the city his eye always meets the same beauty under an infinite variety of aspects. The sweet and pure character of the banks of the Lahn, the admirable proportions of the cathedral, its majestic elevation above all that surrounds it, the graceful and picturesque arrangement of all the old houses, as well as the towers of the old castle, everything attracts and rivets the eye; one imagines that he sees realized one of those charming landscapes that the miniatures in the ancient missals, or the pictures of the schools of Catholic painting still present to us, in the vistas of the scenes which they portray. It seems to me therefore impossible not to admire and love this beautiful city of Marburg, even coming upon it, as I did for the first time, without any idea of the treasures which it possesses. But how much more when one is seeking for traces of dear St. Elizabeth, when one discovers there souvenirs of her on all sides, when one finds her name fresh in the memory and on the lips of every one, and stamped on every monument! Some of the oldest portions of the convent and of the hospital which she founded, and in which she died, are still standing. These buildings, now dilapidated, which for a long time served as the grand court of justice of the Teutonic Order in Hesse, surround the church, separate it from the river, and form still an antique and picturesque group. One large building, with a series of gable-ends, is especially noticeable, called the *firmaney* (infirmary), in which an ancient tradition, supported by several historians, indicates the

spot where she died. The gate of the city nearest the church is called *St. Elizabeth's Gate;* a short distance from this, on the road which leads to the pretty village of Wehrda, where she spent the first days of her life at Marburg, there is a triple jet fountain, called *Elisabethsbrunn.* It was there that she herself washed the clothes of the sick; a large blue stone, upon which she knelt while engaged in this severe work, has been taken to the church, and is still to be seen there. A little further on we come to *Elizabeth's Bridge,* and then to *Elizabeth's Mill,* structures whose origin is no doubt contemporaneous with the Saint. On the other side of the city, the road over the bridge which one follows in coming from Cassel leads to the church, passing the foot of the hill on which the castle stands, and along the charming shades of the botanical garden; this highway is still called the *Pilgrims' Stone* (*Pilgrimstein*); it recalls the long lines of pilgrims which the inhabitants of Marburg witnessed for three centuries, coming from all parts of Germany, of Christendom in fact, to visit the holy tomb, and whose affluence contributed so much to the prosperity of the city, which before was scarcely more than an open borough.

There is nothing here but what has its popular consecration, even the austere Conrad; a fountain, called *Moenchsbrunn,* is surmounted by a statue in the habit of a monk, with a large open book, which he rests upon his heart; the people say that every night at midnight he turns a page of the volume.

But it is time to speak of that celebrated church which, more than any other place in the world, is peculiarly the inheritance and the product of Elizabeth's glory. It stands, as I have said, on the banks of the Lahn, at the foot of the hill of the castle, opposite an elevated ridge which connects this sort of promontory with the neighboring heights. The land upon which it is built is marshy,

and must have presented great obstacles to the architects; but it would be impossible to conceive of a finer position, one better adapted to display the beauties of the edifice itself, and by its presence to lend an added charm to the city and to the lovely country which surrounds it. One needs to have visited all the environs, to have studied successively all the points of view which they offer of the city, to appreciate the merit of this situation and the advantage which it gives to the noble monument that stands there. And one might apparently spend years in going about through these environs, and search in vain for a site better adapted to its purpose. It may be added that this is a distinctive trait of most of the great edifices which the Christian ages have bequeathed to us. The people, struck by the extraordinary advantages of this position, as well as by the admirable beauty of the church itself, have surrounded its origin with all sorts of marvellous traditions. According to them, it was Elizabeth herself who first conceived the idea of building her church; it was her wish that it should be located on the summit of a rock, still known by the name of *Kirchspitze*, which overlooks the present basilica; she wished, moreover, that it should have an immense tower, with a bell that might be heard even in Hungary. But her efforts in this direction were all in vain; it was impossible for her even to dig the foundations; the work by day was found to be destroyed at night. She met with no better success in several other places where she made a similar attempt. Finally one day, after her patience had thus been tried, she picked up a stone and threw it at hazard from the height of the rock, swearing that she would build a church on the spot where the stone should fall. The stone fell just where the beautiful nave of the church stands today; work was commenced at once, and with success. This tradition seems to gather greater force from the

extremely marshy nature of the ground upon which it is built, which would have dispelled any thought of construction there, except for some supernatural motive.

The people also relate that during the whole time of this great work the funds were deposited in an open chest to which all of the workmen went and took whatever was due them, and that when any one took too much, the money returned itself to the chest during the night. Expressive and beautiful symbol of that faith and self-devotion of which modern generations have lost the habit, together with the secret of the unrivalled wonders of Christian art.

Let us now approach the church, through a garden of roses, the flower which here, as at Wartburg, seems to be especially consecrated to Elizabeth. The first stone of this noble edifice, we should say, was laid by the good Landgrave Conrad, on the eve of the Assumption, in the year 1235, some months after the canonization of the Saint,[1] and this date makes the church of Marburg the earliest of all those in Germany which were built in the ogive style. It required twenty years to complete the foundations alone, and twenty-eight more to construct the most essential parts, which were not finished until 1283; the interior, the spires, and the majestic whole, as we see it to-day, was not completed until during the course of the fourteenth century. The church is 230 feet in length and 83 in breadth; the foundations have a depth of 43 feet; the height of the interior vaults is 70 feet, that of the two towers, surmounted by their spires, 303 feet.

[1] There is authentic proof of the existence of two churches older than this one, in which it is probable that Elizabeth performed her devotions, and in which her obsequies were celebrated. One of them disappeared in the later constructions of the Knights; the other, called that of St. Francis, was still standing fifty years ago, and was destroyed by the last Knights.

These two towers were united, at about the centre of their height, by a gallery which served as a communication between them, as is the case at Boppart and elsewhere in Germany. There was a large iron ring attached to one of the towers at about this point, and popular tradition said that the depth of the foundation was the same as the distance from the earth to this ring.

What strikes one immediately in this basilica, both in its exterior and interior, is its admirable harmony and perfect unity; in this respect it seems to me to have no equal. Although nearly a century and a half in construction, one might fancy that it was all accomplished with a single stroke, or that it sprang forth in a day from the mould of the religious master-mind that conceived it. It is not only the most ancient, but the most pure and complete monument of Gothic architecture in any of the German countries, and I believe there is scarcely in Europe an edifice of any considerable size in which the architecture is to be found so wholly free from any influence foreign to its essence, from any mingling with forms which preceded or followed it. No traces are to be found anywhere of the roundheaded arch, known as the Roman or Byzantine (except in one little side door of the nave), nor of the flowery and profuse ornaments which little by little altered the simple beauty of the ogive.

From this rare and wonderful unity, and from the excellent proportions of all the parts of the edifice, there results a complete whole, which produces upon the soul an impression of exalted delight and intimate satisfaction, from which, it seems to me, even those who are strangers to the religious inspirations of art could hardly escape. In wandering under these arches, at once so simple, so light, and so solid, in the silence and the present solitude of this vast enclosure, in enjoying the calm and the freshness which reign there, one might sometimes believe him-

himself transported, as it were, to the atmosphere of Elizabeth, and in this monument raised to her glory is recognized the most faithful mirror of her sacred personality. The characteristics and contrasts of her charming life all seem reflected here. Here is found, as in her, something at once humble and bold, gracious and austere, which at the same time attracts and commands. These stones, each marked with the pontifical cross, seem, like so many acts of her life, to mount towards God and heaven, stripping themselves of whatever could bind them to the earth. Everything here seems to be full of and to inspire fervor and simplicity, the two fundamental traits of Elizabeth's character. One is tempted to believe with the people, regardless of the testimony of historical dates, that we must attribute to her the idea, the plan, and even the execution of this glorious edifice; especially when we search in vain the minutely detailed accounts of that period for a name, a single name, which preserves the memory of an architect, a mason, or a workman of any kind among all those who during a hundred and fifty years labored at this immense work. They seem to have taken the same precautions to conceal themselves that others have to immortalize their insignificant works. Anonymous heroes, it was their wish to bury their glory in that of the dear Saint, the beloved of Christ and of the poor; and when their laborious mission was accomplished they died as they had lived, in the simplicity of their hearts, ignorant and ignored, forgetting all except God and Elizabeth, and forgotten by all except by Him and her.

It is in searching in vain for their names that we recognize how truly there was a force, other than that of material effort, or even the highest intelligence, that cooperated in the building up of these houses of God, worthy as they were of the name, before the miserable degrada-

tion of religious architecture since the sixteenth century. One cannot but believe that some superior and mysterious life dwells in these creations of the ancient power of our Faith, and the beautiful words of St. Augustine come to us: "Nothing could enter here, if these timbers and stones did not cling to each other in a certain order, if they were not attached together in peaceful cohesion, and if, so to speak, they did not love one another."

If we had to describe in two words the distinctive character of the Church of St. Elizabeth, we should say that it was its virginal purity and simplicity. True Christian architecture appears there, decked in the very graces of youth just budding forth and blossoming in the sunlight of faith. In placing it alongside of the more recent and grander cathedrals of Strasburg, Cologne, Salisbury, and Amiens, in comparing these different images of the immortal Spouse of our Lord, one might find the same distinction that exists between the robe of a virgin who for the first time approaches the holy table and the brilliant robes of a married woman.

I shall be pardoned for giving a few details. The exterior, which has the advantage of being completely detached from any other building, presents the curious feature of two ranges of windows, one above the other, while in the interior the elevation of the lateral walls is not interrupted by any gallery or division. These windows, moreover, are of the utmost simplicity; they are two double ogives, surmounted by a circular opening and set in a large ogive; an arrangement which is identical with that used in Notre Dame of Paris, and which seems to be derived from the round-arch windows of the cathedrals of Pisa and Sienna, of the Or-San-Michele, and of the Palace Strozzi at Florence, and of most of the great edifices of the Middle Ages in Italy. There are no pinnacles, or turrets, or flying buttresses, nor any of the ornaments of the later

Gothic style; only two galleries surround the entire edifice. The principal or western façade is of the most elegant simplicity; it consists of a spacious doorway, surmounted by a large window and a gable, quite ornamental, flanked by two high towers with thin spires of stone, perfectly alike, the pure and graceful form of which cannot be too much admired. The tympanum of the doorway is occupied by a beautiful statue of the Blessed Virgin, the special protectress of the Teutonic Order. She is crushing vice and sin under the form of little monsters; at her feet, on the right, a vine springs up laden with grapes; on the left, a rose-bush covered with flowers, on which little birds are singing; and on each side a kneeling angel venerates this queen, victorious over sin, and the eternal source of the fruits of truth and of the flowers of beauty. The execution corresponds with the touching grace and the deep meaning of the image.[1] The foliage of the capitals and of the fillets of the voussoirs of this doorway are also treated with an exquisite delicacy. The plain base of the two towers, without openings, forms a happy contrast with the rich ornamentation of the doorway itself. The same may be said of the lancet windows of the first story of the towers, with the rich and large round window in the centre, as also with the gable. One cannot but admire the wonderful skill shown in disguising the junction of this last member with the towers by open panels and a sort of embattled balustrade with a taste as pure as it is original. The two towers contain seven bells, the smallest one being of silver, which produce skilfully combined and perfect harmony.

Upon entering, one is struck by the division of the

[1] M. Moller, one of the first archæologists and architects of Germany, declares that in the course of his long labors he has never met with a representation of the Blessed Virgin which seemed to him better conceived or better executed than this. *Die Kirche der H. Elizabeth*, p. 6.

church into three naves of equal height. This peculiarity, which is quite rarely found in the great basilicas of the Middle Ages, seems to have been a distinctive feature of the churches of the Teutonic Order, and was carried out in all the great structures which it has left in Prussia.

The natural color of the stone is beginning to appear from underneath the badigeon with which it was once covered; the joining of the freestone is to be seen everywhere. We admire the wonderful combination of solidity and lightness which made it possible to allow only two feet, and sometimes eighteen inches, of thickness to the lateral walls. A double row of columns forms the division between three naves; they are perfectly simple, each one being merely flanked by four smaller shafts; their capitals, carved in leaves of vine, ivy, rose, and trefoil, are the only sculptural ornament that the architect has admitted. A little statue of the Saint in wood, holding a church in her hand, stands in front of one of the columns of the nave.

The church is built in the form of a cross, as was the custom always, before any one had conceived the idea of modelling Christian churches after pagan temples; the choir, as well as the transept, or arms of the cross, terminates in a polygonal apsis. The choir is enclosed by a handsome jube, or gallery, in wainscoting. The reredos of the main altar, consecrated May 1, 1290, is magnificent, and in perfect accord with the style of the rest of the church. It consists of three arches inscribed in triangular and ogee-shaped canopies, flanked by four turrets, and surmounted by a coronation of the Blessed Virgin in relief. The windows of the choir are furnished with beautiful stained glass of the end of the thirteenth century, which merits special study. The six windows of the apse contain large full-length figures and subjects embellished in medallions. We recognize our Lord, with Adam and Eve at His feet; St. Elizabeth crowned; St. Francis (in a blue

tunic), and our Lady; twelve medallions represent different events in the life of our Saint. The eight other windows represent merely clusters of flowers and plants, the design and colors of which are harmoniously combined. The stained glass in the other parts of the church was destroyed by the army of the most Christian king, Louis XV, who, during the Seven Years' War, turned this church into a storehouse for forage.

In the two arms of the transept, we observe, on four abandoned altars, pieces of sculpture and painting, representing scenes in the life of our Saint, as well as legends of St. Ann, St. Catherine, St. John Baptist, and St. George, attributed in part to the school of Albert Dürer, but I think of an earlier date and of a more purely religious taste than his. There are subjects in high relief, wrought in gilded wood, enclosed by shutters which are covered, both outside and in, with paintings on cloth stuck to the wood, natural and expressive, but the retouching somewhat overdone. One represents the little Princess leaving Hungary in a covered carriage to come to Thuringia; another the miracle of the cloak brought to her by an angel in exchange for one which she had given to a poor man as she was about to enter the banquet hall, with curious details regarding the service at the Duke's table. In others we recognize the miracle of the leper placed in her husband's bed; the last embrace of Elizabeth and Louis as he is starting on the Crusade; the Saint's expulsion from Wartburg, and her refuge in a hog pen; her fall in the mud; the visit of Count Banfi; her taking the habit, etc. The pieces in relief represent her death, her obsequies, and the exaltation of her relics in the presence of the Emperor. These three are evidently the work of an artist worthy to treat such subjects.

In the southerly arm of the cross are found the tombs of the princes of the houses of Thuringia and Hesse, who

sought the honor of being buried in the church of their illustrious ancestor. "In this palace of the Supreme King," says an historian, "Elizabeth, His royal Spouse, was the first buried; and then she received there many of her compatriots, saints and loyal servants of God, destined to come forth with her from their tombs on the last day, and to rejoice with her in eternal happiness." Her director, Conrad of Marburg, Adelaide, daughter of Count Albert of Brunswick, a woman of great sanctity and even renowned for her miracles, and Brother Gérard, provincial of the Franciscans, a man of remarkable austerity, all desired to rest near Elizabeth. There is no trace whatever now of the place of their burial. But we still find in excellent condition the beautiful mausoleums of the Landgrave Conrad, brother-in-law of the Saint, with the scourge in his hand; the Duchess Sophia, Elizabeth's daughter, whose face is completely worn away by the kisses of pilgrims; and those of fifteen other princes and princesses of Hesse, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, among whom we may especially admire that of the Landgrave Henry III, *the Mailed*, who died in 1376, and whose statue lies by the side of the truly beautiful one of his wife Elizabeth, upon the same stone; three little angels seem to be holding up and smoothing the pillow upon which their heads rest, while charming statuettes of monks and religious kneeling at their feet are reading prayers for the repose of their souls. Many other tombs with reclining figures in relief, or with magnificent coats of arms in bronze, are enchased in the pavement of the church.

In one of the angles at the other extremity of the cross, to the north, is the chapel in which rested the remains of St. Elizabeth herself. This chapel forms a sort of oblong portico with four arcades, two of which abut upon the walls of the apsis, and the other two are open. The interior arch is an intersected ogive; but the quadrangular

top is flat and terminates in a high balustrade, from which no doubt the relics were shown to the people, or the musicians were placed there on occasion of grand solemnities. Charming foliage, carved and gilded on a ground of blue, adorns the arches and the angles of the chapel, in strong contrast with the bareness of other parts of the church. In the open space, between the arcade and the summit, there is a fresco, half effaced, which represents the crowning of Elizabeth in heaven, with an inscription, of which only these words can be deciphered: GLORIA THEUTONIE . . . DIGNUM GEMMA SOPHIE FONS DECUS ECCLESIE . FIDEI. . . . Another fresco on the Eastern partition wall portrays the obsequies of the Saint. In the centre of the chapel stands her statue in colored wood; the braids of her hair are golden; in her hand she holds a church. Finally, on the exterior wall, running its entire length, there is a bas-relief which merits special attention, both on account of its antiquity, which may probably be traced back to the century in which the Saint lived, and because of its simple and naïve character. It is the oldest monument of art relating to our Saint in existence. We first see Elizabeth dead, lying with her hands crossed on her breast, in her open coffin; our Lord, with Our Blessed Lady at his right, stands near; the soul of Elizabeth, under the form of a little newly born child, but already crowned, is presented by her guardian angel to Christ, who lifts His hand to bless her; the Blessed Virgin is regarding with love her humble and docile disciple; at her side a bearded man, with lance in hand, and wearing the cross of the Crusades, represents perhaps the Duke Louis, but more probably the penitent Conrad. On the right are seen St. John the Evangelist, the special friend of the Saint, St. Catherine, and St. Peter with the keys of heaven; on the left, St. John the Baptist, St. Mary Magdelene, and a bishop, who is believed to be Seigfried, Archbishop of Mentz.

It was before this bas-relief that the pilgrims came to kneel, and the steps leading to it are still to-day deeply hollowed and worn away by their knees.

The shrine in which the relics of the Saint were enclosed in 1249 was placed above this bas-relief, and protected by a lattice-work which still remains. It is now transferred to the sacristy which occupies the angle between the choir and the Northern transept. This sacristy is itself a charming piece of architecture wholly worthy of the church; its starry double vault rests upon a clustered central column, producing a most pleasing effect. The shrine is one of the most curious and richest monuments of the sculpture and goldwork of the Middle Ages, the author of which is as unknown to us as is the architect of the church itself. It is in the form of an oblong Gothic building, with double roof and gable ends, six feet in length, two in breadth, and three feet and a half in height. It is made of oak covered with gilded silver; at each end there is a portal, under one of which there is a statue of the Blessed Virgin crowned with a diadem of precious stones with the Infant Jesus, and under the other the figure of St. Elizabeth in a religious habit, with a book in her hand. On one of the sides we see a statue of Jesus Christ seated, teaching, with three of the Apostles on His right and three on His left; on the other, our Lord on the Cross, which is in the form of a tree with branches.[1] St. John and St.

[1] The beautiful legend will be remembered which was so universally held during the Ages of Faith, according to which the wood of the Cross was from the tree of knowledge, from which Eve gathered the fatal fruit. The Church seems to allude to this in the stanza of the hymn, *Pange Lingua*, which she sings during the adoration of the Cross on Good Friday:—

De parentis protoplasti
Fraude Factor condolens,
Quando pomi noxialis
Morsu in mortem corruit,
Ipse lignum tunc notavit,
Damna ligni ut solveret.

Magdalen are at His feet; two angels are crowning His bended head. Two little bas-reliefs, one on each side of these angels, represent the Nativity and the Resurrection, with these beautiful incriptions: *Hic Virgo parit rorem vitae retinetque pudorem*, and *Hic stimulum mortis Christus vincit leo fortis.* At the right and left are the six other Apostles. Over each Apostle we read a sentence from the *Credo*, according to a custom quite frequent in that Christian art which was as profound and fruitful as it is little understood and appreciated by modern Catholics. All the figures are surmounted by richly carved canopies. Upon the inclined planes of the roof there are eight different pieces in bas-relief, representing several scenes in the life of Elizabeth, especially the farewell between the Saint and her husband as he is departing for the Crusade, with all the incidents, such as the accidental discovery of the cross in Louis' pouch, the gift of the ring, and their last kiss. These statues and bas-reliefs, all well executed, are of solid silver covered with gold. An immense number of cameos, onyx, pearls, intaglios, sapphires, emeralds, and other precious stones of very great worth were incrusted in the shrine and in the settings of the statues; most of them were antique and added to the almost inestimable value of a monument to which the devotion and love of the faithful for Elizabeth had consecrated so many treasures.[1] Many of these cut stones had been brought by pilgrims and Crusaders from the East; some of them were regarded as the spontaneous production of nature.[2] The supernatural qualities attrib-

[1] It was generally believed that this shrine was worth at least six hundred thousand pounds of the Empire; that is to say, more than two millions of francs ($400,000); other estimates placed the value at six times this sum.

[2] These stones have so great an historical and mythological importance that the celebrated Creuzer, the author of *Symbolism*, was willing to devote a special work to the study and description of them,

uted to stones, during the Middle Ages, are well known; they were the most precious ornament, as well as the most significant offering that one could bring to the tomb of a saint. There was an onyx so beautiful, according to a prevailing tradition, that an elector of Mentz had offered to purchase it at the price of the whole bailiwick of Amœneburg. In spite of the wars and religious troubles, there remained eight hundred and twenty-four precious stones (not including the pearls), in 1810, when they were counted before the shrine was carried off by order of the Franco-Westphalian government and taken to Cassel, where the most valuable, to the number of one hundred and seventeen, were stolen from it.

This shrine recalls, in its form and beauty, the famous shrine of St. Sebald at Nürnberg, ornamented with statues of the twelve Apostles by Peter Fischer; but it has the advantage of being three centuries older. There is perhaps not a shrine in the world, except that of the Three Kings at Cologne and the great reliquaries at Aix-la-Chapelle, which surpass it in antiquity and richness.

In this resting-place, which the faith and love of a Christian people had sought to render worthy of her, the relics of the dearly loved Saint reposed until the time of the Reformation. We borrow from two Lutheran historians the account of what took place then, as unprejudiced testimony of the kind of victories achieved at that time by

entitled *Zur Gemmenkunde; antike geschnittene Steine vom Grabmahle der H. Elizabeth, in der nach ihr genannter Kirche zu Marburg, von D. Fr. Creuzer, Leipzig*, 1834. Since we have mentioned the name of this learned writer, we cannot pass over in silence the touching description which he gives of his recollections of the impression he received, during his childhood, spent at Marburg, whenever he entered the church of St. Elizabeth; he attributes to it his first penchant for religious and mystical studies; he declares that this church gave the first blow to his Lutheranism. "This St. Elizabeth," he says, "was everything in the world to me!"

what has since been called progress and enlightenment. On *Exaudi* Sunday, in the year 1539, the Landgrave Philip, a direct descendant of St. Elizabeth, went to the church dedicated to his ancestress, and had the evangelical service performed there for the first time. He was accompanied by Duke Albert of Brunswick, Count Isemburg, a famous poet named Eobanus Hessus, writer of heroic epistles in the style of Ovid,[1] Professor Crato, and quite a number of those doctors and learned men who had parodied their German names by grotesque Latin or Greek translations,[2] and among whom the Reformation found its most zealous adepts. At the conclusion of the service, he called for the commander of the order, residing at Marburg, Lord Milchling, who was afterwards elected grand master, and went with him to the sacristy, where the shrine was kept. A great multitude of people followed him. The Prince and his friends having entered the sacristy, the commander had the door closed to keep back the crowd. The strong iron grating which protected the shrine was locked; the commander refused to open it and threw the key away; the sacristan also declared that he did not know how to get into it. Then the Landgrave ordered one of his assistants to go and find a locksmith and a blacksmith, and bring with them large hammers and chisels to force open the grating; but on going to the door of the sacristy, which the commander had closed, it was found impossible to open it from the inside. It was necessary, therefore, to throw the key out of the window, and have some one pick it up and unlock the door from

[1] He even composed one from Elizabeth to her husband Louis, absent in the Holy Land, modelled after that of Penelope to Ulysses.

[2] For example, Dr. Eichmann was called *Dryander;* John Eisermann, *Ferrarius Montanus*, etc. It is known that Melanchthon is merely a translation of the original name of that arch-heretic, *Schwarzerd*, literally, *Black-Earth.*

the outside. While waiting, his highness deigned to remark, "If we have to die of hunger in this sacristy, we will commence by eating the commander." "That is to say," replied the latter, "if I am disposed to allow myself to be eaten."[1] However, the necessary instruments for forcing an entrance were soon brought. As they were about to proceed with the work, the Prince exclaimed, "Well, thank God! Here we have the relics of St. Elizabeth, my own bones, as well as hers! Come out here, grandma Eliza!"[2] Then this worthy grandson of a Saint, turning to the commander, said, "It 's too bad, Mr. Commander. I wish it were filled with silver coins; but there must be some old Hungarian florins there." "I know nothing about it," said the commander. "I don't know what there is there. I never approached so near it in my life, and I would to heaven that I were not here to-day!" The shrine being opened, the Landgrave thrust in his hands and drew out a casket about five feet in length, lined with red satin, which contained the bones of the Saint; he took them and delivered them to an officer of his household named Collmatsch, who had them thrown into a forage bag which a servant held, and taken at once to the castle. The Landgrave then cut out himself a piece of the shrine which he thought was solid gold, and had it tested by a goldsmith. Finding that it was only gilded copper, he said, "See how these priests deceive the people; they made the coffin of copper and kept all the gold for themselves." Then he discovered that the Saint's head was missing, and after a great deal of urging he obliged the commander to show him a secret closet of the sacristy, where this head was preserved with the crown and the gold chalice which the Emperor Frederick had consecrated to her the day of her solemn translation,

[1] Account of an eye witness.

[2] Das walt Gott! Das ist S. Elisabethen Heiligthum! mein Gebeines, ihre Knochen! Komm her, Muhme Eltz! — *Ibid.*

three hundred and three years before. Philip had these precious objects taken immediately to the castle, and they were not again seen.

This is the man whom the Protestants have surnamed *Philip the Generous.*

This same year, 1539, he obtained a dispensation, signed by Dr. Martin Luther and seven other evangelical theologians assembled at Wittenberg, to take a wife in addition to one that he already had, who had borne him a large number of children. Need we wonder that since then the ancient and glorious house of Hesse has fallen, in its Protestant branches, to the point of living for a century upon the proceeds of the sale of its subjects to England, to be employed in fighting the savages of America ?

The remains of the Saint were soon afterwards buried under a plain stone of the church, in a place unknown to any one, except the Landgrave and two of his confidants. In 1546, under pretext of securing the precious shrine against the dangers of the war, he ordered it placed in the castle of Ziegenhayn. But two years afterwards, yielding to the urgent prayers of the commander, John of Rehen, Philip had this sacred property brought back to Marburg, at the same time that he thought it necessary to obey the order Charles V had given him, the year of the sacrilege, to restore the relics of St. Elizabeth to the church. They were taken up and delivered to the commander, but were not, however, replaced in the shrine ; according to the receipt given by John of Rehen, July 12, 1548, a large part of them was already missing, and since that time their dispersion has become complete. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, when Spain was devoting a great deal of effort and expense to save the relics of Saints which were found in the countries invaded by heresy, the devout Infant Isabella Clara Eugenie, then governing

the Low Countries, whose memory is still so popular in Belgium, obtained the skull and a considerable portion of the bones of her patron Saint, and had them taken to Brussels and placed with the Carmelites;[1] the skull was afterwards sent to the castle of Roche-Guyon, in France, from whence it has quite recently been transferred to Besançon by the Cardinal Duke of Rohan.[2] One of the arms was sent to Hungary; other portions of her relics were found in Hanover, in Vienna, in Cologne, and especially in Breslau, in the rich chapel consecrated to her in 1680 by Cardinal Frederick of Hesse, bishop of that city and one of her descendants. There is preserved in this same chapel the stick of black wood which served as her support at the time of her expulsion from Wartburg. I have already spoken of her glass which is at Erfurt, of her wedding garment which is at Andechs, of her wedding ring which is at Braunfels, with her prayer book, her table, and her straw chair. Lastly, her veil is to be seen at Tongres.

There are none of her relics at Marburg. A tradition asserts that her bones were buried under the main altar, from which they were stolen in 1634. Nothing of hers is found there to-day, except a large piece of tapestry, upon which it is said she worked, and which represents the story of the prodigal son; it is used now for the communion service according to the Lutheran rite. Her shrine, which has been empty for three centuries, was carried off to Cassel under the reign of King Jerome, but brought back to Marburg in 1814, and replaced in the

[1] The convent of the Carmelites disappeared with so many others under the blows of democratic vandalism, and all trace of these precious relics has been lost, in spite of Mr. Staedtler's efforts to find them.

[2] It is venerated to-day at the hospital of St. James in that city.

sacristy.[1] The magnificent church which was consecrated to her, given over since 1539 to a religion which regards the invocation of saints as idolatrous, has never since then resounded with a single note of public homage in her honor.

And thus this soul, so dear to heaven and earth, has not had the privilege of so many other souls, whose remains still rest amidst a faithful people, surrounded by the worship and love of successive generations, beneath the shadow of the altar, where day after day is offered the spotless sacrifice. On the contrary, the whole country which was once the home of this sister of the angels has betrayed the Faith; the children of the people whom she loved so much, whom she consoled and relieved so tenderly, have disowned and rejected her powerful protection. Thuringia, where she lived as a young woman and wife, and Hesse, where she spent the days of her widowhood, have both renounced Catholicism. The haughty spirit of Luther has entered to tarnish the pure memories of that castle of Wartburg, forever sanctified by her pious childhood, by the trials of her youth, by that conjugal union unrivalled in its tenderness and holiness. From the height of those old towers, whence, as it were, her indefatigable love spread itself abroad over the whole country, the eye of the traveller will search in vain for a single Catholic church or cottage. At Eisenach, where by her charity and her sufferings she was so truly the representative of Christ, there is not a Catholic to invoke her, not an altar, not a sacred stone where one may bend the knee to honor her sweet name and invoke her blessing upon a pilgrimage

[1] Mr. Staedtler remarks with much force that modern writers of Germany have not hesitated to raise their voice in condemnation of the theft of the precious stones of the shrine committed by the French, but have not a single word of blame for the sacrilegious profanation of the relics, of which this shrine was but the depository.

consecrated to her. Finally, in the very city in which she died, where so many thousands of pilgrims came to venerate her relics, where the marble is still all worn and hollowed by their faith, her life is but an historical fact, and the few Catholics who live there have not even a Mass on the day of her feast![1] Her tomb even has not been respected, and among her descendants was found a man who, with insults, stripped it of her bones.[2]

Is it not, then, the duty of every Catholic to pay her his homage, to strive to restore her former glory, and to offer her the tribute of his love and devotion, be the means ever so humble? That was indeed the sentiment of that poor Capuchin whom with regret we quote for the last time, when he said in the middle of the seventeenth century: "In visiting this grand and beautiful church and this rich tomb of the Saint, my heart was pierced with grief as I beheld them in the hands of the Lutherans, so shamefully stripped of their ancient splendor. Oh! I poured out my sorrow before Almighty God in heaven, and I earnestly besought St. Elizabeth to restore order there. But to make amends for all the honor which non-Catholics fail

[1] Since 1811, thanks to the French conquest and to the new constitution, the practice of the Catholic religion, which for three centuries was rigidly prohibited by Protestant toleration, is authorized at Marburg. There is a little Catholic church there, and about three hundred of the faithful; but the priest in charge limits himself to saying Mass on Sundays only, and when I asked him, on the very day of St. Elizabeth's feast, whether he was not going to say a Mass in her honor, he replied that he had never thought of it.

[2] In Germany, as in France, false science and rationalistic history have never failed to give their approval to the sacrilegious work of violence and cupidity. In 1837, three hundred years after the outrage of Philip *the Generous*, an *eminent* historian of the modern school, Mr. Luden, printed what follows, in Vol. XII, Bk. 26, Ch. IX, of his *History of the Germans*. "Elizabeth was an overstrained woman who could find no other sedative for her nerves than the spasms of a convulsive religiosity."

to render, we should honor thee all the more, invoke thee with increased fervor, O glorious Saint of God! and rejoice always in remembering that God withdrew thee in thine infancy from Hungary to give thee to Germany, as the most precious of jewels."[1]

Moreover, even in the countries which have forgotten or disowned her glory, she receives an homage perhaps sweeter and more lovely than any ever paid her; to a little flower, humble and modest as she was, they still give the name of the *little flower of Elizabeth;* it closes its calyx at evening when sunlight disappears, as Elizabeth closed her soul to all that was not a ray of the grace and light which is from on high.

How happy I should be, if this feeble testimony which I am seeking to render to her glory should be as acceptable to her as must have been the devout and confident affection which once led some Catholic peasants to give her cherished name to the flower they loved.

And before bidding farewell to these poor pages, may I be permitted, for the last time, to lift my heart and my humble voice to you, O sweet Saint; you whom I too, imitating so many fervent souls, dare to call our *dear Elizabeth*? O dearly loved of Christ, deign to be the celestial friend of my soul, and assist it to become the friend of your Friend! Turn towards me from the heights of heaven one of those tender regards which upon earth healed the most cruel infirmities of men. In a cold and gloomy age I came to be enlightened by your holy light, to seek fresh fervor from the fire of your love; and you welcomed me; and the thought of you has a thousand times brought peace to me. May you be blessed for the many tears forced from me by the recital of your sufferings and your patience, your charity and your angelic simplicity; for all the labors and undertakings which you have pro-

[1] P. Martinus de Kochem, p. 836.

tected, for the many lonely days that you alone have filled, for the many sad hours which your dear image has alone been able to brighten. May you be blessed forever, and may you in turn deign to bless the latest and most unworthy of your historians.

RESPONDENS JESUS DIXIT: CONFITEOR TIBI, PATER DOMINE COELI ET TERRAE, QUIA ABSCONDISTI HAEC A SAPIENTIBUS ET PRUDENTIBUS ET REVELASTI EA PARVULIS.

JULY 18, 1836.

APPENDIX

INDEX OF HISTORICAL SOURCES

CONSULTED IN WRITING

THE LIFE OF SAINT ELIZABETH

In seeking to raise this humble monument to the sweet and pure glory of *dear St. Elizabeth,* I have been obliged to renounce any merit for invention or creation; the only honor my ambition has wished for was to be regarded as a scrupulous translator and a faithful compiler of the monuments of the Faith of our fathers. A conscientious accuracy is the only qualification to which I have felt I could have any claim; and it is for the purpose of establishing this that I insert here a list of all the historical sources upon which I have drawn during three years of researches and travels, undertaken solely for this object, and in which may be verified the citations that I have made. I shall be criticised perhaps for the great number and the extent of these citations. I was forced to this in order to justify the minuteness and familiarity of certain details; of certain discourses which I found in ancient writers little known in France, some of whom were contemporaries of the Saint, or of her immediate posterity, and others such as have worked the rich mine of the tradition of popular piety, and have not thought it their duty to reject everything that did not accord with the reason and the manners of their epoch. I am conscious of the fact that

a great difference will be found between this manner of writing the lives of the Saints and that which has been adopted, especially in France, during the past two centuries. But it would be doing violence to my conscience and to my faith to follow any other method. To those who may fancy that a trace of exaggerated erudition is to be found in these pages, I shall esteem myself happy in being able to give them some little idea of the zeal, the patience, and especially the conscientiousness with which the German historians of the present day, without distinction of religion, labor in this field, so rich and yet so unexplored, of the history of all the Christian ages. As for those readers whom the poetic or romantic character of certain passages may cause some uneasiness concerning my entire veracity, I can only refer them to the authors enumerated in the following pages, as also to all the authentic monuments relating to the lives of the Saints in general, prior to the era of modern mutilations and alterations. In transcribing the annals of the life of our Saint, I have adopted the rule of adding nothing, but likewise *of suppressing nothing.* I have observed this rule with the most scrupulous fidelity. I may solemnly declare that there is not a single detail, not a single word attributed to any of the personages of this history which is not extracted verbatim from records, printed or manuscript, which in my judgment are invested with sufficient authority. May I be permitted here to repeat, and to apply to myself, the words of the first biographer of the Saint, happy in being able, after a lapse of five centuries, to speak with the same faith and the same simplicity? "I take God and His holy angels to witness, that in this little book I have put nothing but what has been gathered from the writings of approved authors, or what I have learned from religious persons and those of unimpeached veracity. I further avow that I am unworthy to record these great and sub-

lime works of grace. It is my earnest wish and hope that some one will come who, in reading this history, will be moved with pity, and will consecrate to it an erudition and an eloquence more worthy of it than mine."[1]

[1] Theod. Thuring. *Prologus in librum de vita beatae Elisabeth.*

I

PRINTS

I. CONTEMPORARIES OF THE SAINT, OR WRITERS PRIOR TO THE REFORMATION

1. *Epistola magistri Conradi de Marbuch ad Papam, de vita B. Elisabeth.* Published in the Συμμικτα of Leon Allatius, and in the 19th volume of *Analecta Hassiaca* of J. P. Kuchenbecker, Marburg, 1735, from a manuscript of the library of Upsal in Sweden (Ep. Conr. Marb.).[1]

2. *Libellus de dictis quatuor Ancillarum S. Elisabethae, sive examen miraculorum et vitae ejus.* Published in the collection of *Scriptores rerum Saxonicarum* of J. B. Mencken, folio. Leipzig, 1728, Vol. II, p. 2007 (*Dict. IV Ancill.*).

3. *Haec est forma de statu mortis Lantgraviae de Thuringiâ,* ex Ms. Liesbornensi, apud Martene et Durand, *Collectio amplissima,* etc. Pars I, pp. 1254–56 (*Mart.*).

4. *Bonaventurae sermo de sancta Elisabeth.* Published in his works. Edition of Mentz, 1609; folio, Vol. III, p. 289 (*S. Bonavent.*).

5. *Theodorici Thuringi, ordinis Praedicatorum, libri octo de S. Elisabeth, Andrae regis Hungariorum filia.* Published in the *Thesaurus monumentorum* of H. Canisius, Vol. IV, of the edition of 1725, pp. 116–152. Very important supplements have been published in Mencken, Vol. II, p. 1987; and in Struvius, *Act. litterar.*, Vol. II, Part I (*Theod.*).

6. *De sancta Helisabeth,* a legend from the famous collection of the lives of the Saints, entitled: *Aurea legenda sanctorum quae lombardica historia nominatur, compilata per fratem Jacobum de Voragine,* and so often published in the fifteenth century (*Leg. Aur.*).

7. *Auctor Rhytmicus de vita S. Elisabethae, landgraviae Thuringiae*

[1] These words in parenthesis are the abbreviations of which I shall make use to indicate the authors of passages cited in the notes of the text of my history.

e codice bibl. Ducalis Saxo-Gothan. Apud MENCKEN, *Script. Rer. Saxonicar.*, Vol. II, p. 2034 (*Vit. Rhyt.*).

8. *Monachi Isenacensis vulgo* JOHANNIS ROTHE, *Chronicon Thuringiae vernaculum*, apud MENCKEN, *Script. Rer. Saxonic.*, Vol. II, pp. 1633–1824 (*Rothe*).

9. *Legende von sant Elsebetenn*, in the great legend called *Passional*, published by *Knoblauch* at Strasburg, in 1517 ; fol. (*Passional*).

10. *Sermo de Sancta Elisabeth*, in the *Thesaurus novus de Sanctis, Nurnberg*, 1487. *Serm.* CLV.

11. *Pomerium sermonum de sanctis hyemales et estivales editi per fratem* PELBARTUM DE TEMESWAR *divi ordinis sancti Francisti.* At the end of the volume we read : *Impressi ac diligenter emendati expensis circumspecti viri archibibliopolae Joannis Rynman de Oringaw: in officina industrii Henrici Gran. Finiunt feliciter anno salutis nostrae mille quingentesimo quindecimo, mense octobri;* folio in two columns. Pray notices another edition of Hagueneau, 1501.

12. *Vita illustris ac divae Elisabeth, regis Hugarorum filiae, conscripta stilo elegantissimo opera Christi Sacerdotis* JACOBI MONTANI *spirensis*, contained in the great collection of Surius, entitled, *De Probatis Sanctorum historiis*, etc., Vol. VI, *Coloniae Agrippae*, 1581.

13. *Annals of Hainaut by* JEAN LEFÈVRE, lib. XLVI, c. 22, published as a complement to the *History of Hainaut, by* JAMES OF GUYSE, from the manuscripts of the Royal Library, by the Marquis of Fortia d'Urban, in 1834–35 (JEAN LEFÈVRE).

2. WRITERS SUBSEQUENT TO THE REFORMATION

A. CATHOLIC

14. ANTONII BONFINII *Rerum Ungaricarum decades quatuor cum dimidio.* Francof. 1581.

15. *Annales minorum, seu trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum a R. P.* LUCA WADDINGO *hiberno*, etc. Second Edition; Rome, 1732, folio, Vol. I and II (*Wadding*).

16. JUSTUS LIPSIUS, *Diva virgo Hallensis opera.* Vol. II, p. 808.

17. *Bavaria sancta, descripta a* MATHAEO RADERO *de societat. Jesu. Monaci* 1615. (Rader.)

18. *Cort verhael van het leven der heyligen van S. Franciscus oirden met haer levende figuren, wt diversche histoire schyvers genomen deur den E. P. Broeder Cornelius* TIELMANS, *guardiaen van der Minderbroederen*

binnen Aken. s'Hertogen-Bosch. Scheffer, 1620, 8vo., goth. type, 258 pp. without the pref. or the approbations.

This work, consecrated to the exaltation of the order of St. Francis, contains, pages 132–142, the life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

19. *The life of Saint Elizabeth, daughter of the King of Hungary, Duchess of Thuringia, first religious of the third order of St. Francis, written by the R. F.* Apollinaire, *revised, corrected and augmented by the R. F.* Jean-Marie, *of the same order.* Paris, 1660. (*F. Apoll.*)

20. *The life of St. Elizabeth, etc., by F.* Archange, *religious penitent of the third order of Saint Francis.* Paris, 1692. (*F. Arch.*)

21. Auserlesenes history Buch . . . von den lieben Gottes heiligen, etc. (Book of select histories of the dear saints of God), by F. Martin de Kochem, of the order of Capuchins, Ausburg, 1732. (First Edition, 1692) (*Kochem*). The 53d history of this collection, 3d part, Vol. II, p. 802–836, is devoted to our Saint.

22. *History of the Monastic Orders,* by F. Helyot. Paris, 1718, Vol. VII, pp. 287–293.

23. *Vita S. Elisabethae viduae, Landgraviae Thuringiae, ducis Saxoniae, Hassiae principis et comitis Palatinae, nec non D. Margaritae Virginis, quarum illa Andreae et haec Belae IV Hungariae regum filiae erat, MSS. codicibus erudita, ac praeviis dissertationibus illustrata, studio* Georgii Pray *S. J. sacerdotis.* Tyrnaviae, 1770.

24. *Die legende der H. Elisabeth,* von Johann Graf Mailath, in the Annual of national history, published by Hormayr, in the year 1822.

B. Protestant

25. Adami Ursini *Molybergensis chronicon Thuringiae vernaculum,* apud Menckenii, *Script. Rer. Saxonic.* Vol. III. (*Ad. Ursin.*)

26. *Diva Elisabetha magnifice coronata; Christliche Ehrengedaechtniss, der H. Elisabeth, in zwei Predigten, von* J. B. Happel (Lutheran rector of the Teutonic Order). Marburg, 1645. (*Happel.*)

27. Georg. Michel Pfefferkorn. *Auserlesene Geschichte von der berühmten Landgrafschaft Thüringen,* etc. 1684.

28. J. J. Winkelmann (*Beschreibung der Fürstenthümer Hussen, etc.* (Historical description of Hesse), Bremen, 1698, fol. (*Winkelm.*).

The 6th part of this excellent work contains the history of the Duke Louis and St. Elizabeth, such as had become national in those countries. It is here related with a natural simplicity, a research as

to details, and a sympathy which make this version one of the best to consult, after primitive sources. The author continually quotes a manuscript entitled *Thesaurus antiquitatum Thuringicarum*, written in 1553 by Henry Crolachius, and which was still in existence in 1696. I made vain efforts to find it in the present libraries of Hesse and Thuringia.

29. *Chr. Fron.* PAULLINI *historia Eisenacensis, etc. Francfort*, 1698.

30. ANDREAS TOPPIUS, *Historia der stadt Eisenach, verfasset.* 1660.

31. *Joh. Mich.* KOCH. *Historische Erzaehlung von dem Schloss Wartburg ob Eisenach*, etc. 1710.

32. *Das im Jahr* 1708 *lebende und schwebende Eisenach, von* JOHANN LIMPERG. 1709.

33. *Bina sanctarum Elisabetharum* (Elizabeth of Schoengau, who died in 1056, and our own Saint) *veluti illustrissimarum Saec. XI et XII, testium veritatis evangelicae in Hassia memoria monumentis et nummis declarata, a* J. A. LIEBKNECHT, etc. Giesse, 1729.

34. J. H. VON FALCKENSTEIN *Thuringische chronik.* 3 v. Erfurt, 1738.

35. J. G. A. GALLETTI, *Geschichte Thüringens.* Gotha, 1783.

36. *Thüringische Geschichte aus* SAGITTARIUS *hinterlassenen Papieren*, etc. 1787.

37. *Elisabeth die heilige, Landgraefin von Thüringen und Hessen, etc., von* DR. KARL WILHELM JUSTI. 1st Edition, Zurich, 1797; 2d Edition, Marburg, 1835 (*Justi*).

I owe a tribute of sincere recognition to Dr. Justi, superintendent (bishop) of the Lutheran Church at Marburg, whose writings and instructive conversations furnished me with the earliest information I obtained upon the history of our Saint, and who has devoted a great part of his life to the task of bringing to light the virtues and the glory of Elizabeth.

38. J. C. S. THON, *Schloss Wartburg*, etc. 4th Edition. Eisenach, 1826.

39. *Genealogical history of the house of Hesse*, by Baron TURKHEIM. Strasburg, 1819.

40. *Geschichte von Hessen, von* CHRISTOPH ROMMEL. 1820.

41. *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen und ihrer Zeit* (History of the Emperors of the house of Hohenstaufen and their Epoch), by FREDERIC DE RAUMAR.

II

MANUSCRIPTS

1. *Das Leben des edeln tuginthaftin lantgraven Ludewigis der de was elich gemahel unde wert der heiligin hochgebornen Frouwin Elizabeth . . . das beschrebin hat er Berlt sin cappellan der yme heymelich gewest ist von joggent bis yn sinen tod* (Life of the noble and virtuous Louis, who was the legitimate husband and lord of the saintly and most noble lady Elizabeth, written by Lord Berthold, his chaplain, who was intimate with him from his youth to the time of his death). A double German manuscript in the library of Gotha, No. 53. The other copy in that of Cassel (*Berthold MS.*).

2. *Vita S. Elisabethae langraviae, a fratre Caesario, sacerdote in monasterio vallis Sancti Petri.* This precious document, due to a celebrated writer of the Order of Citeaux, known by the name of *Caesarius Heisterbacensis*, who died in 1237, six years after St. Elizabeth, is noticed in a very superficial manner by Leibnitz, *Introd. in Script. rer. Brunsv.*, Vol. II, p. 47; and Harzheim, *Bibliot. Coloniens.*, p. 45. M. Justi says, in his last edition, that he has not been able to verify its existence. I discovered it among the materials gathered by the Bollandists for the continuation of the Acta Sanctorum, which at present are deposited in the library of Bourgogne at Brussels.

3. *Der Lieben frowen sant Elysabethen der landgrefin leben* (Life of the dear lady Saint Elizabeth the duchess). German manuscript, No. cv, of the celebrated Palatine Library of Heidelberg, sent to Rome by the Duke Maximilian of Bavaria in 1622, and returned to Heidelberg in 1815. (Cod. Pal. Heid.) I am convinced that this manuscript is but a translation of the Latin manuscript frequently quoted by Wadding, in his *Annales Minorum*, as the work of a Franciscan contemporary, whom he thus describes, Vol. II, p. 211: *Anonymus coaevius qui* SE VIDISSE *vel ab aliis certe fide accepisse, quae de sancta femina scripsit, testatur.* This Latin manu-

script was at Louvain in Wadding's time ; I sought for it in vain in the libraries of that city.

4. *Here commences the life of Saint Elizabeth daughter of the King of Hungary.* Manuscript No. 7633 of the Royal Library of Paris, written in the fourteenth century. (*Rutebeuf.*) This is the history in French verse of our Saint, by the celebrated troubadour Rutebeuf, one of the richest poets of our ancient literature, who flourished during the last half of the thirteenth century and died in 1310. He describes himself in the following verses : —

Dont Rutebeuf a fait la rime
Ce Rutebeuf rudement rime
Et sa rudesse en sa rime a. . . .

He says that Master Erard requested him to compose this poem,

Et toute traire
De Latin en rime fransoise,

in honor of Queen Isabella, wife of King Thibaut of Navarre. The Saint is here always called Isabella. He says afterwards : —

Ceste estoire
Qui est venue de Honrgie
Si est le procès et la vie
D'une dame que Ihesu Criz
Aima taut (ce dit li escriz),
Qu'il l'apela à son servize.
De lei lit on en sainte eglise ;
Si com hon tient le lit Abel,
Doit on tenir sainte Ysabel
A sainte, a sage et a senée.
Vers Dieu ce fut si asenée
Que toz i fu ses cuers entiers
Et sa tendue et ses mestiers. . . .[1]

5. *Chi commenche de sainte Yzabiel.* A manuscript of the thirteenth century, of the King's Library at Paris, department of *Saint-Germain des Prés*, No. 1862 (*Le Moine Robert*).

Another poem in French verse in honor of St. Elizabeth, by a

[1] This poem has since been published by M. Achille Jubinal, in his complete edition of Rutebeuf.

contemporary author (as is evident from the writing alone of the manuscript) who speaks of himself in this verse which concludes his work: —

Brother Robert of Camblinmuel.

6. *Sente Elsebet Leben.* A German poem, in the archives of Darmstadt, of 221 pages, written in the fourteenth century, the language of which, however, seems to date back to the thirteenth. A considerable portion of it appeared in the collection entitled *Diutiska*, published by Professor *Graff* of Berlin (*Cod. Darmst.*).

7. *Von sente Elysabethen.* A German poem, in a great legend, in rhyme, of the Library of Strasburg, department of the Johannites, A. 77, on parchment, writing of the fourteenth century. (*Cod. Argent.*)

The life of our Saint occupies pages 179 to 203 of this volume in folio.

8. *Von Sente Elsebethen.* A legend, in prose, of the Saint, in the manuscript collection of HERMANN of FRITZLAR, entitled *Leben der Heiligen Praedigten*, and bearing the dates 1345 and 1349, in the Palatine Library of Heidelberg, No. CXIII and CXIV (*Herm. Fritz.*).

9. *Vita beatae Elizabeth.* Manuscript in the Library of the Vatican, No. 4401, ff. 20 to 27, on parchment, bound with the arms of the Borghese, writing of the fourteenth century (*Cod. Vatic.*).

10. *Vita S. Elisabethae Hungariae reginae.* Manuscript of the Laurentian Library at Florence, Case XXVII, Cod. I, No. 18. Noticed by Montfaucon, Biblioth. Manusc., No. 292 (*Cod. Flor.*).

11. *Legende der H. Elisabeth und St. Gertraud ir mutter*, in the manuscript called the *Chronicle of Andechs*, in the Library of Munich, Cod. Germ. 218.

12. *Historia ecclesiastica Isenacensis, per M.* NICOLAUM REBHAHN, dated in 1621, in the library of the gymnasium at Eisenach.

13. JOH. WALDSCHMIDT, *Commentatio succincta de vita et fatis M. Conradi de Marpurg, Confessoris divae Elisabethae*, etc. Collection of manuscript documents in Latin of the seventeenth century, in the library of Cassel. *Hassiaca*, fol. No. 112.

14. *Leben Mag. Conradi von Marburg*, by J. N. SCHMINKIUS, library of Cassel. *Hass.* 4°, No. 136.

15. Among the materials and manuscript documents gathered

together by the Jesuits of Antwerp, called Bollandists, for the continuation of their collection of the *Acta Sanctorum*, and which are to be found at the present time well arranged and bound together in the order of dates, in the Burgundian Library at Brussels, those relative to St. Elizabeth occupy two thirds of a volume folio devoted to the saints of the 19th of November (*Ms.* Bolland. *Brux.*).

I have not thought it necessary to include in this enumeration all the Latin and German Chronicles, nor all the lives, more or less detailed, of the saints, which give any information concerning St. Elizabeth, and which I have consulted; the number of such would have been too great. F. Giry, of the order of Minims, in his *Lives of the Saints*, published in the seventeenth century, said that more than a hundred authors had treated of this life; and to-day one might safely place the number at three times that.

But there are some works especially devoted to our Saint, which remain unknown to me, in spite of all my researches. I note particularly: —

1°. The Latin manuscript of the contemporaneous Franciscan quoted by Wadding, as being of Louvain. (See above No. 14 of the prints and 3 of the manuscripts.)

2°. *Thesaurus antiquitatum Thuringicarum*, of H. Crolachius. Ms. of 1553.

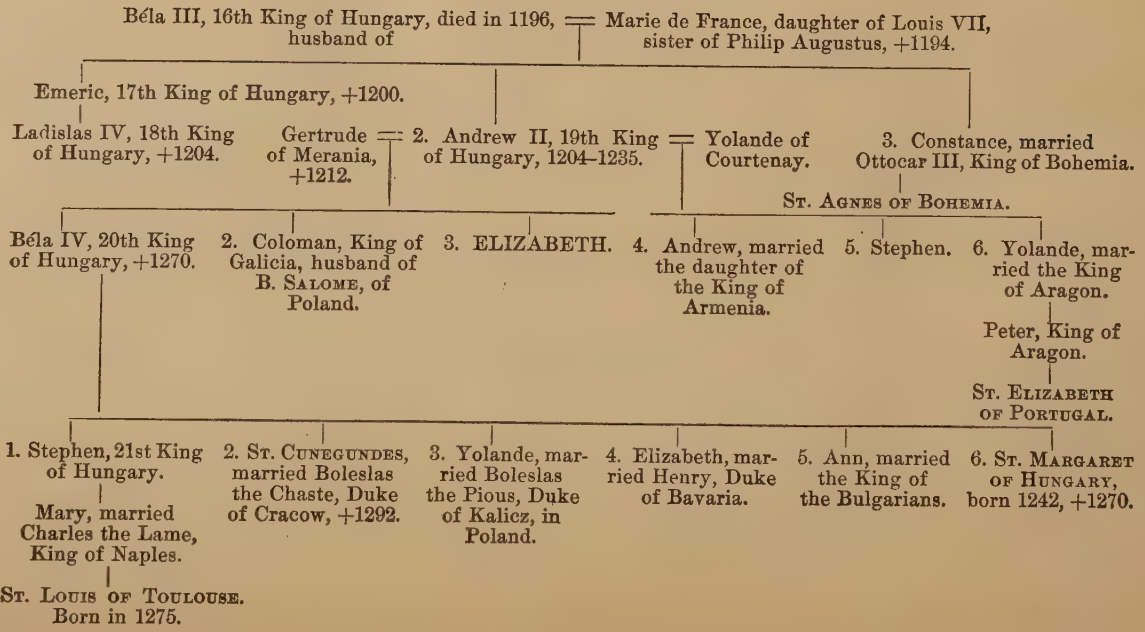
3°. Jodocus Clichtovaeus *de Natali S. Elisabethae sermo.*

4°. H. Hanckins, *Angeli, Soc. Jes., Historia de S. Elisabetha*, Paris, 1632, 8°.

5°. Lastly, Henry of Gand, called the Solemn Doctor, in his book entitled, *Catalogus virorum illustrium*, written in the thirteenth century, to serve as a supplement to St. Jerome's Catalogue of Ecclesiastical writers, continued by Sigebert of Gemblours, says, concerning Gerard, a monk of Saint-Quentin, at Lille: "Scripsit plurima miracula, quæ B. Elisabeth de Thuringia, post mortem suam dicitur fuisse operata." Quoted by M. Huet, in his excellent *Researches* upon the life and the doctrine of Henry of Gand. Gand, 1838, p. 196.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE FAMILY OF ST. ELIZABETH

PATERNAL LINE


Béla III, 16th King of Hungary, died in 1196, husband of
Marie de France, daughter of Louis VII, sister of Philip Augustus, +1194.
Emeric, 17th King of Hungary, +1200.
Ladislas IV, 18th King of Hungary, +1204.
Gertrude of Merania, +1212.
2. Andrew II, 19th King of Hungary, 1204–1235.
Yolande of Courtenay.
3. Constance, married Ottocar III, King of Bohemia.
St. Agnes of Bohemia.
Béla IV, 20th King of Hungary, +1270.
2. Coloman, King of Galicia, husband of B. Salome, of Poland.
3. ELIZABETH.
4. Andrew, married the daughter of the King of Armenia.
5. Stephen.
6. Yolande, married the King of Aragon.
Peter, King of Aragon.
St. Elizabeth of Portugal.
1. Stephen, 21st King of Hungary.
Mary, married Charles the Lame, King of Naples.
St. Louis of Toulouse. Born in 1275.
2. St. Cunegundes, married Boleslas the Chaste, Duke of Cracow, +1292.
3. Yolande, married Boleslas the Pious, Duke of Kalicz, in Poland.
4. Elizabeth, married Henry, Duke of Bavaria.
5. Ann, married the King of the Bulgarians.
6. St. Margaret of Hungary, born 1242, +1270.

MATERNAL LINE

Berchtold III, Duke of Meran, Count of Andechs, Marquis of Carinthia and of Istria.

1. Egbert, Bishop of Bamberg, +1237.
2. Berthold, Patriarch of Aquileia, +1251.
3. Otto, Duke of Méran, Count of Burgundy.
4. Henry, Margrave of Andechs and of Istria.
5. St. Hedwiges, married Henry the Bearded, Duke of Silesia and of Poland, +1243.
6. Gertrude, married Andrew, King of Hungary, +1212.
   - ELIZABETH.
7. Agnes, married Philip Augustus, King of France, +1201.
8. Mathilda, Abbess of Kitzingen.

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Life of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary

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